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"DON'T BE AFRAID," SIR ORIEL SAID, ENCOURAGINGLY, "YOU WILL BE SAFE IN A FEW MINUTES."

## A FORTUNATE ACCIDENT.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

"So you mean to give up your wandering habits and settle down like a decent member of society," observed Ralph Fermor, as he sat in the smoking-room of the Falmouth Hotel, with a cigar between his fingers, and looked with admiring eyes at his old friend and companion, Sir Oriel Graystock.

"Yes," replied Sir Oriel, lazily, as he removed his cigar from his mouth; "a man gets tired of wandering about from pillar to post when he has reached my time of life. I shall be eight-and-twenty next birthday."

"An awful age to be sure; and I am one year older than you. But you are right—if a man does nothing before he is thirty he may consider that he has let the game of his life slip through his fingers."

"Yes, I have thought of that," assented Sir Oriel; "and I am uncomfortably near thirty without having made a beginning; you at least have a profession."

"My profession is very much at your service in exchange for your fortune, old man; but I suppose, to begin with, you'll be taking unto yourself a wife!"

"Not if I know it," was the very emphatic reply. "I may be a fool, but I'm not such a fool as to slip my head into a matrimonial noose. I am having Graystock refurnished and redecorated, and I mean to go in for the county at the next general election, that is if a lawsuit I have on hand doesn't go dead against me."

"A lawsuit!" echoed Lieutenant Fermor.

"Yes," was the almost curt reply; "my opponent is a woman, too. My lawyers tell me I am pretty sure to win."

"They think there is a doubt about it then?" asked Fermor.

"There is always a doubt where the law or a woman is concerned," was the brief answer; "but suppose we smoke outside, it will be more pleasant."

"Yes, you are right, but it is getting late, and I must be off to my ship. What do you propose doing with yourself to-morrow?"

"Among other things I want to go to Mylor Church; it is somewhere across the harbour, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's on the other side of Trefusis Point. I'll come ashore and go over with you in the morning if you like. You see, I'm almost as much a stranger here as you are. I only joined the ship yesterday week, and as yet I've seen very little of the neighbourhood, and nothing at all of the people."

"Well, come and breakfast with me, and then we'll take a boat. An odd fancy has haunted me for some time past; an unaccountable desire to see the grave of old David Killigrew, who is buried there."

"Is that all you are going for?"

"Yes; the old miser was nothing to me beyond being a distant relative, from whom I have inherited a considerable sum of money; but I have dreamed of him several times lately, and he has always seemed to be saying to me, 'Go to my grave in Mylor churchyard.' The dream was repeated so often that at last I determined I

would go; and that, in point of fact, is what brings me here."

"Well, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good," laughed Ralph Fermor, "and as I should not have seen you but for your dream, I'm very glad you had it, and I hope the injudicious suppers that produced it had no worse effect. Good-night."

Then the young men shook hands and parted, Lieutenant Fermor walking down to a small quay where a boat manned by blue-jackets, was waiting to take him on board H.M.S. *Phoenicia* that was stationed in the harbour.

Sir Oriel returned to the hotel and found a telegram awaiting him.

It was from his lawyer, and ran thus,—

"Defendant's solicitors intimate that their client is willing to make terms. Would it not be wise, as you are in the neighbourhood, for you to see the lady yourself?"

"Confound the fellow; why should I see the lady? I'll see her and him—"

He did not say where, but it was evident that the place to which he would like to consign them was not what would be generally considered a desirable locality; and he was still grumbling half-audibly, when a man who was crossing the hall on the way to the door, looked at him, and with evident surprise, exclaimed,—

"Sir Oriel Graystock, by Jupiter!"

The young baronet looked up quickly, the frown still upon his handsome countenance, but it disappeared as soon as he recognised the speaker, and he said cordially:

"Admiral Lanyon, how do you do; have you been staying here long?"

"I'm living in Falmouth," replied the elder man, shaking the baronet by the hand. "Here's my address, come and see me before you go away."

"I will," was the reply.

Then the two men shook hands again, and parted. The admiral being evidently in a hurry.

It was still early in the morning of the next day—being something between ten and eleven o'clock—when Sir Oriel and young Fermor walked down to the Market-quay, and engaged a boatman to take them round to Mylor Creek, telling him when they landed at the Coastguard Station there to wait for them.

Mylor Church stands close to the water's edge, but the churchyard rises in so steep a slope on two sides of the building that some of the graves are higher than the roof of the church itself—a condition of things by no means uncommon in Cornwall. The situation is remarkably beautiful, and the churchyard is just what a country churchyard ought to be—well-kept, and plentifully planted with simple, fragrant flowers.

The sun this morning shines brilliantly, whole orchestras of birds sing sweetly in the leafy boughs overhead, and gaudy peacock butterflies chase each other from blossom to blossom, as though life were one long joyous holiday.

Sir Oriel Graystock experienced no difficulty in finding the grave of old David Killigrew, since the monument upon it was one of the most conspicuous in the churchyard.

But as he stood looking upon the mass of polished granite that covered the last resting-place of his distant kinsman, the young baronet could not help wondering why he had come here.

It was not out of love for the memory of the dead man, because he had not seen him half-a-dozen times in his life; and though he owed part of his fortune to him it had come rather because he was the representative of one branch of the family than from any personal goodwill on the part of the testator; and knowing this, Sir Oriel naturally felt that much gratitude ought not to be expected from him.

The large altar-like tomb of granite precluded the possibility of the grave being planted with flowers, but some loving hand had recently placed a wreath of fresh-gathered roses on the tomb, and both the young men wondered who could have cared enough about the dead man to bring and leave it there.

With something like a sigh, and with a feeling of disappointment, Sir Oriel turned away and began to look curiously about him.

Suddenly he gave his companion's arm a grip,

to put him on his guard and ensure silence; and then Ralph Fermor saw a woman, only a few yards distant from them, kneeling by the side of a tiny grave with a wreath of white rosebuds in her hand which she was placing lovingly and tenderly upon the cold earth which covered what had once been a fair human blossom.

The girl's face was turned towards the young men, though she was unconscious of their presence, and they could observe the beautifully chiselled regular features, the pure complexion, bright and fair as the roses and lilies it rivalled, and the clear fearless blue eyes, soft and tender now with emotion, but with great possibilities in them for the expression of scorn and anger.

They could see nothing of her height or figure as she thus knelt, but her bright brown hair escaping from its fastenings fell over her shoulders, and the hands with which she was arranging the flowers were small and beautifully shaped—though they were now very much sunburned.

"Don't disturb her," Sir Oriel whispered, as he drew Fermor away.

But, though he put a greater distance between himself and the fair stranger, he still kept her well in sight, unwilling, as it seemed, to bear himself away from so fair a vision.

At length he saw the girl move as though she were about to rise, and feeling awkward at having watched her so intently, he abruptly turned away and went on to the spot to which Fermor had strolled—for it must for the sake of candour be admitted that the latter had not been so much impressed with the beauty of the fair strangers had his usually far less susceptible companion.

"Some young mother mourning for her first-born," he thought, with mild sympathy, and he had turned quickly away, not wishing to intrude upon her grief.

But Sir Oriel Graystock had not been so unobservant as his friend, and he had particularly noticed that the girl wore no ring, and he therefore concluded rightly enough that she was neither married nor engaged to be so.

He was still loitering among the tombs, keeping an earnest but distant watch on the girl whose face had impressed him as no other face had ever done, when he saw her rise to her feet, and he observed that she was tall and graceful and even somewhat stately in her air and carriage.

"She isn't so very young either," was his mental comment; "she must be one or two-and-twenty if she is a day. Why, what can she be doing there?"

This last question was occasioned by the young lady walking straight to David Killigrew's tomb; rearranging the wreath that did not lie quite to her satisfaction, and then adding a few flowers which she had reserved from the smaller grave.

For a moment or two after her work was done she paused as though lost in thought or occupied in silent prayer, and then she turned away and slowly descended the sloping path leading to the water's edge.

"Who can she be?" was the question that rose in Sir Oriel's mind. "What could make her lay flowers on old David's tomb? Surely she cannot be the Kate Killigrew with whom I am at daggers drawn. The very woman with whom Harmer advises me to open negotiations in person."

Scarcely noticing his friend he followed the girl, keeping at a little distance behind, and he observed her go to a spot where a small boat was moored, and saying something to an old man who was loitering near.

She with his assistance placed the empty basket in which she had carried the flowers into the boat, then got into it herself, and having arranged her sculls began in a business-like way to row in the direction of the harbour.

"A strong-minded independent young woman, at any rate," laughed Fermor, as he watched her. "It is not very often that you see girls rowing about here alone."

"I suppose the work is too hard for them," responded Sir Oriel quietly, "but that young

lady is by no means wanting in physical strength."

Then he signalled to their own boatman, and unheeding a mild protest from his friend, who would have loitered longer in the pretty spot, he took his seat, and told the man to row back to Falmouth.

"I suppose you don't know that lady?" he asked the man, indicating the fair carwoman, who was some little distance ahead of them.

"No, sir, I don't know her name," was the reply, "though I've seen her about the harbour a good bit, and she's always in that same boat."

"Then it must be her own."

"Yes, sir, I suppose it is," replied the man, who had not been as much interested in the lady as the baronet was.

"I wish you'd find out who the boat does belong to, and let me know this evening," said Sir Oriel. "Come up to the hotel after nine o'clock, and you'll get a crown for your pains."

Before the man could reply, however, an exclamation of alarm from the baronet, and an imperative order, "Pull for your life," made Fermor start, and the boatman turn, to see the girl's boat capsized, and its fair occupant struggling in the water."

"Get that rope ready, Ralph," said Sir Oriel briefly to his friend, while he himself rapidly threw off his coat and boots, and prepared to take to the water the moment they were near enough to the girl, who was just contriving to keep herself afloat, though evidently not without difficulty.

"Can you swim?" asked the lieutenant, briefly, as he obeyed the order.

"Yes, like a duck," was the reply.

"You'd best be careful of the currents round here, sir," advised the boatman. "That lady can swim well, or she'd have been swept under before now, but it's as much as she can do to hold her own. I don't think you need go in the water, sir, we'll be able to pick her up without."

But Sir Oriel Graystock paid no heed to man's caution; he saw that the girl was distressed and wounded with her clothing; and though she had not lost her presence of mind, it was only too evident that she could not long continue the struggle.

As the boat neared her, the baronet sprang overboard, and with a few vigorous strokes reached her side.

"Don't be afraid," he said, encouragingly, "you will be safe in a few minutes."

Then he helped to support her while the boat was got alongside, and Fermor and the boatman assisted her to get into it.

"Thank you very much for coming to my rescue. I don't know how I came to upset my boat; I never did such a stupid thing before," said the girl with a frank smile as she looked at Sir Oriel. "And what a miserable plight we are both in," she went on with a rueful expression of countenance; "I hope we shall neither of us take cold."

"I am in no danger," said the baronet, cheerfully, "and you must put on my coat which is quite dry."

Here Bill Bray, the boatman, interposed by saying,—

"We'd best look after the lady's boat, sir."

Then he hauled the sculls to Fermor and began to make his own boat tilt in a perilous manner in his efforts to reclaim the other one.

By the aid of a third boat, which came to their assistance at this point, the *Lady Kate* was turned on her keel, the sculls were picked up, and a large shawl was offered the dripping girl—a loan she gladly accepted in preference to the coat, which she told Sir Oriel he had better resume.

Then, having taken the address of the lender of the shawl so that it might be sent back to its owner, they set off to row across the harbour, the baronet with one oar, the boatman with the other, towing the *Lady Kate* after them.

By desire of the girl the boat drew alongside of the small quay at the end of the town nearest the railway-station; and here it was quite evident to the young men that she was well known.

"I have had an accident," she said to a boatman, who sprang forward directly he saw her face. "Get me a fly; I can't walk up to the Grove in this plight."

Then she turned to Sir Oriel, and gracefully said—

"I am really very grateful for your kindness to me, and if you are living far from here, my aunt, I am sure, will be glad to offer you shelter while dry clothing can be obtained."

"Thank you, I have only to make my way to the hotel yonder; but I hope I may have the privilege of calling to learn that you are no worse for your involuntary bath."

"We shall be glad to see you," was the reply. "My name is Kate Killigrew, and I live at the Grove; anybody will show you the way."

"And my name is Oriel Graystock," he returned, almost diffidently; "I suppose I have the honour of being your cousin."

"Of course you have; and of being my only enemy," she responded, with amused surprise. "But we will sign a truce for to-day, at any rate. And as I am getting cold now, I will say good morning."

So saying, she bowed to both of the young men as they helped her into the fly, and she then was driven rapidly away.

"Has the lady far to go?" asked the baronet as he turned to tip the boatman.

"No, sir, only up the hill; she'll be there in another five minutes," was the reply.

Then Sir Oriel and Ralph Fermor likewise got into a fly and were driven to the hotel.

"It is fate," was the young baronet's mental comment, as he thought of his singular meeting with the cousin whom he had so recently resolved to shun.

Then he said aloud—for he had dressed by this time, and he and the lieutenant were just about to sit down to luncheon,—

"I suppose I must call, but it's rather awkward, as that lawsuit I told you about is with the young lady herself."

"It is awkward, but you can send your card, with kind inquiries; or I will go as your deputy if you like," was the covertly mischievous reply.

"I can't slight the girl in that way," replied Sir Oriel, shortly. "Having asked permission to call, of course I must do so; but you'll call on your own account, won't you—and with me."

"Yes," was the slowly uttered reply. "I suppose I may as well; she seems a nice, jolly sort of a girl, and one needn't like her the less for being an heiress."

Sir Oriel looked at his friend for a moment with a passing flash of jealousy, but it disappeared almost as quickly as it came, for Ralph Fermor did not look a formidable rival; and the Baronet reflected with some satisfaction that the man who could speak of "that divine creature" as a "nice jolly sort of girl" could have very little good taste, and absolutely no sentiment.

It never occurred to Sir Oriel, however, that somebody else might have been in the field before himself.

## CHAPTER II.

It was at four o'clock on the following afternoon that Sir Oriel Graystock, accompanied by his friend Fermor, presented himself at the Grove, and was shown into the presence of Miss Killigrew.

Many times during the past twenty-four hours had the young Baronet rehearsed this meeting with his cousin.

He knew that the girl was virtually her own mistress, and that the old lady who lived with her, and whom she called aunt, was in point of fact a far-away cousin of her late mother.

He was in rather a comfortable frame of mind when he was shown into the drawing-room at the Grove, closely followed by Ralph Fermor.

"How do you do, Sir Oriel?" said Kate Killigrew, rising from a chair in which she had been seated talking to a young man, and giving her hand frankly to the Baronet. "It is quite evident you are no worse for yesterday's bath. How

do you do, Mr. Fermor? Let me introduce you to my aunt, Miss Martindale; to my friend, Mrs. Lanyon; and to my cousin, Theo Martindale."

The gentlemen bowed, and the Baronet mentally wished Mr. Theo Martindale at the bottom of the sea; for a single glance at that young man made him somewhat rashly conclude that he was an "impudent puppy."

Ralph Fermor's verdict upon him was that he was a "tame cat," but neither of the young men had an opportunity at the moment of expressing these charitable sentiments, for old Miss Martindale had hardly had time to return their salutation and inform them that she was very deaf, before Mrs. Lanyon, to use Theo Martindale's phrase, "literally pounced upon the two newcomers."

Mrs. Lanyon was a widow of very uncertain age; she said she was seven-and-twenty, and no one was bold enough to contradict her; but how much more than seven-and-twenty she really was her friends were either too polite or too prudent to inquire.

"I am so glad to meet you, Sir Oriel," she said, gushing over the Baronet with her most fascinating smile. "Katie has been describing to us how chivalrously you saved her from a watery grave. I can't tell you how grateful I feel to you, for Katie and I are devoted to each other. It was so romantic of you to be on the spot at the very moment—now, wasn't it?"

"It was fortunate for me," replied the Baronet gravely: "but I cannot claim to have saved my cousin's life, for she could swim, and other help was close at hand."

"But she felt herself drowning:—didn't you dear?" asked the widow, turning to Miss Killigrew.

"What did you say?" asked that young lady, feeling annoyed at Mrs. Lanyon's exaggeration.

"You were nearly being drowned, when Sir Oriel gallantly came to your assistance," was the more mildly-framed question.

"I was in the water, and he helped me out of it," was the matter-of-fact reply; then turning to Mr. Fermor she asked if he would like to go and look at her prize rose trees!

Fermor replied in the affirmative; and then the young people went out into the garden, leaving Miss Martindale to blissful repose in her armchair.

"Won't you have a hat, dear?" asked Mrs. Lanyon nervously, as Kate took up a lined sunshade that stood in the hall to protect her uncovered head from the fierce rays of the sun.

"No, I never wear one in the garden," was the careless reply.

Then Miss Killigrew walked on, talking to Fermor as though she were greatly interested in his conversation.

"Oh, Sir Oriel, I must have a hat," said the widow, putting on her most helplessly infantine expression. "Would you mind waiting just one little moment; I shall be racked to death with neuralgia if I don't have my head covered."

Sir Oriel felt savage, though politeness forbade any expression of his feelings; and he would probably have been compelled to stand kicking his heels in the hall, waiting for a woman whom he had never seen before, and whom he never wished to see again—if Kate Killigrew—who knew the proclivities of her dear friend—had not at this moment turned round and asked,—

"Aren't you coming with us, Sir Oriel? Mrs. Lanyon knows her way about the place, and she can easily follow us."

The young baronet at once seized the opportunity, and he resolved to fight very shy of the widow for the rest of his visit.

But what man could fight shy of Mrs. Lanyon when she had once made up her mind to monopolise his whole attention.

Mrs. Lanyon was setting her cap at Sir Oriel Graystock in a manner that was enough to take the breath away from any inexperienced youngster.

Sir Oriel was not an inexperienced youngster, however, and the fair widow would have to be very much more clever than Miss Killigrew gave her credit for being before she would succeed in making him her slave.

She was quite unconscious of this, being a

woman to whom successive failures only gave a greater desire to succeed; and she now talked of the essays and stories she had written, and the music she had composed, as though her own sayings and doings must be the most interesting subjects that could possibly be mooted.

Kate summoned them to go into the house for five o'clock tea.

Miss Martindale was wide awake by the time they returned, and she began to talk to Sir Oriel, whom she chose to consider her own particular guest.

"You must come and dine with us to-morrow," she said, in her quaint old-fashioned way, "and you must make our house your home. There must be no ill-feeling between you and Katie, for you and she are the last representatives of two good old families that have intermarried till the interest of one should be the interest of the other. I want you two to be friends, and not to let any question of property come between you to make you enemies."

"I should be very sorry to be at enmity with my cousin," replied Sir Oriel, feeling more awkward than he had ever felt in his life before; "and I will come to dinner to-morrow with pleasure."

"What does he say, my dear?" asked the old lady, who was deaf, turning to Kate, whose voice she could always hear more easily than that of any other person.

"He says he will be good friends with us all; that he will come to dinner, and that he hopes you will give him a good one."

The baronet's face clearly showed that he had not been guilty of uttering the last part of the sentence; but Miss Martindale needed no such protest, knowing her niece so well as she did; and she smiled, shook her head threateningly at the delinquent, and was just inviting Ralph Fermor to favour them also with his company, when the drawing room door was thrown open, and a servant announced,—

"Admiral Lanyon!"

Was it fancy; or did Ralph Fermor, when the name was uttered, see a change come over Mrs. Lanyon's face that seemed for a moment to add a dozen years to her age?

He could not tell; if the change came it went away as rapidly as it appeared, and he was, at any rate, too much surprised himself to see Sir Oriel greet the new comer as an old friend, to observe how the widow became pale with anxiety when the two men shook hands.

Theo Martindale saw her agitation, however, and he there and then resolved to cultivate the Admiral more than he had done hitherto.

## CHAPTER III.

ADMIRAL LANYON was one of those men who never seem to grow old.

Time, it is true, had whitened his hair, and blanched his beard, but it had not taken away the fresh bloom from his cheeks, nor the lustre from his eye; while his figure—though a trifle portly—was still well set up, and his movements were quick and easy, as though his muscles had not yet lost the elasticity of youth. The admiral was a widower, but he had lost his wife in the first year of his married life; and thus while he had not fallen into the rather slovenly habits that some married men contract, he had acquired a certain amount of gentle tenderness and ready sympathy that only contact with a pure-minded loving woman could impart to a generously receptive nature.

It was his only son, the offspring of this short year of wedded life, who had been the husband of Mrs. Lanyon, and this son had died three years after his own marriage.

Of the circumstances attending his death I will not speak here, suffice it to say that they were both mysterious and painful.

With Katherine Killigrew, Admiral Lanyon was a great favourite, in addition to being an old friend, and she now shook hands with him almost affectionately, made him sit down by her side, and almost drove Sir Oriel into a fit of jealousy by the attention she paid to the old sailor.

Mrs. Lanyon was very polite to her father-in-law, but she did not "gush" over him; and he, for his part, just spoke to her as he came into the room, and then seemed altogether to forget her presence.

Whether this was accidental or intentional, Ralph Fermor was puzzled to decide.

Why he should care to decide was a question that he could not answer, for he certainly was not in love with the scheming widow.

But though he was not in love with her she wholly puzzled and half-fascinated him, while she likewise aroused his curiosity; and being a man with comparatively little to do, he found in her a certain amount of mental occupation in which he could take a lazy interest.

Afternoon tea could not last very long, however, and Sir Oriel soon rose to go.

Admiral Lanyon rose also.

"I was coming down to your hotel this evening to have a smoke with you," he said, "but if you are engaged to-night, I'll come to-morrow."

"Sir Oriel is coming here to dinner to-morrow, Admiral, and we want you to come too," here interposed Kate Killigrew, smilingly; "I was going to send round this evening to ask you."

The old man bowed gallantly as he replied, "I am always honoured when you invite me, *sia belle!*"

Then, with old-fashioned politeness, he kissed the girl's hand, and turned to the young baronet, who said,—

"If you have no other engagement come on with me now."

The old man consented, and Lieutenant Fermor, who felt as though he should be something like the fifth wheel to a coach, remarked to Theodore Martindale,—

"You don't feel inclined for a stroll, I suppose?"

"Indeed I do," was the ready answer; "I was just thinking of going down to the beach."

Then the gentlemen took their leave. Theo Martindale making some low-toned remark to Kate about going for a walk.

The four gentlemen dined together, and had a pleasant rubber afterwards, Sir Oriel was left to himself and began to pace the room slowly and thoughtfully.

What a change had come over him since the morning of the previous day, and what an age he seemed to have lived since he and Fermor went over to Mylor church to look at the grave of a man who had left him a large addition to the very moderate fortune that had come to him through the death of his cousin, whom he had succeeded in the baronetcy!

He was thinking of all this now—thinking of the days when he was only possessed of a modest four hundred a year, when his uncle, Sir Wilbraham Graystock was alive, and his cousin Herbert about to be married to a great Cornish heiress.

How far away from him the Graystock estate and the title seemed then!

But death came, suddenly and swiftly.

The first to go was his uncle, who was found dead in his study.

And then his cousin's baby boy, a human blossom of a few months old, was taken.

The broken-hearted mother was the next, and her disconsolate husband was not long in following her; and thus it happened that before Oriel Graystock could be called to the Bar, for which profession he was studying, a sudden change of fortune came to him, and he went abroad; and it was during his absence from England that old David Killigrew, to whom he was related through his late mother, had died.

"It was strange, my dreaming so constantly of the old man, and then meeting her by his grave," he kept musing, as he paced restlessly about his room; then another thought occurred to him, and he exclaimed suddenly,—

"I wonder what child is buried there; it was quite a baby's grave that she was kneeling at!"

The question puzzled him, for he remembered that his cousin's appearance as she knelt arranging the flowers was such that he had for

the moment taken her to be the mother of the child whose grave she tended so carefully. "Some little niece or nephew of hers must be buried there," he concluded at length; "but I will go over to Mylor in the morning and see. Fermor is on duty till the end of the day, and I really have nothing of any consequence to do."

Then he went to bed and dreamed that Mrs. Lanyon was marrying him against his will, and that his cousin Kate was sitting upon David Killigrew's tombstone, and encouraging the widow and laughing at him.

#### CHAPTER IV.

In pursuance of his resolution made the previous night, Sir Oriel Graystock walked down to the market quay, and ordered the boatman, whom he had engaged for the same journey once before, to row him over to Mylor Church.

Ned Bray, the boatman, was in a talkative mood this morning, but his passenger was not at all inclined for conversation, and it was some little time before Sir Oriel roused himself to listen to the man, and this was not until he found he was talking about Kate Killigrew.

"She haven't been in her boat since Tuesday, when you helped her out of the water, sir," the man was saying; "for now she goes to Green Bank, and crosses over to Flushing by the ferry-boat, and then she walks on to Mylor; 'tis just a stiffish little walk for a lady, but Miss Kate doesn't think nothing of it."

"You speak as though you knew a great deal about Miss Killigrew, and yet two days ago you didn't know her name," remarked the baronet sharply.

"Ay, ay, sir, that's true enough," replied the man, good-humouredly. "I knew lots about Kate Killigrew, of course; everybody hereabouts knows about her. But I've been away from Falmouth for a matter of seven years or more; and though I've seen her in her boat times enough since I came back, I didn't recognize her till I heard her name."

"Why don't you call her Miss Kate, or Miss Killigrew?" demanded the baronet, hotly. "The lady is a relation of mine."

"It's out of no disrespect to her, sir," said the man, in an explanatory rather than an apologetic tone. "I don't s'pose there's a man, woman, or child, for miles round, that don't know of Miss Kate's goodness and charity, and that wouldn't think much more of you, sir, for being related to her."

"It's very kind of them, I'm sure," retorted the baronet, shortly.

But he felt an uncomfortable sensation of having been taken down himself, instead of having given Ned Bray a useful lesson in the way of respect for his social superiors.

While silently admiring Pendennis Castle and the view of the town of Falmouth, built, as it is, in terraces one above the other, on the steep side of the hill which rises almost from the water's edge, he had fallen into a train of pleasant thought and woke up to find himself at his destination.

Telling the man to wait for him, Sir Oriel sprang ashore and walked through the gate into the churchyard.

Without waiting to look about him, he went straight to the spot where two days before he had first seen his cousin kneeling.

Early as it was in the morning, some one had been there before him, for already there were freshly cut flowers placed upon the grave, and looking about he caught sight of Kate Killigrew, who was just leaving the churchyard by the principal entrance which lay in an exactly opposite direction to the gate by which he had entered.

She had just turned to give a parting glance at the graves, to which she made an almost daily pilgrimage, when she caught sight of her cousin, and the bright colour of her cheeks assumed for the moment a deeper hue.

To bow in acknowledgement of his lifted hat was of course necessary, but certainly she need not have hesitated as to whether she should

turn back and go a step or two to meet him, or should go steadily on her way, as though he had not been there.

Sir Oriel did not hesitate for a moment, however; directly he recognised Kate Killigrew he made the best of his way towards her, his pleasure at meeting her, being much too strong to admit of delay.

"How do you do?" he asked, taking her hand in his own. "I scarcely hoped to find you here this morning," he went on, "though I confess I came early on the chance of doing so. I want you to come with me to David Killigrew's grave; will you?"

"Yes," she replied, quietly; "I will go with you, if you like. I have just come from there."

"It is you then who put flowers upon his tomb?" he asked, knowing well what the answer would be.

"Of course it is; there is no one else here to do so."

"You were very fond of him!" he said gently, as they stood together by the old man's grave.

"Yes," she answered, steadily; "so fond of him that sooner than squabble over the estate he left me I will give it up to you if you covet it enough to take it."

"Oh no, Kate, don't think so meanly of me as that!" he cried impetuously. "It is because I believed the old man had no legal right to will it away from me that I instructed my lawyers to commence an action. It was out of no disrespect to his memory, nor from any desire to rob you of what ought to be yours, believe me."

"Still, I will not fight about the estate, nor will I allow any lawyers to do so in my name," she said, resolutely; "if you believe the estate is yours, take it."

"That is preposterous; of course I can't do anything of the kind," he replied in a vexed tone; "but don't let us talk about that at present. You knew my cousin David very intimately, didn't you?"

"He was like a father to me," was the low-toned reply; "and when he died I missed him as such. My own father died soon after I was born, and Mr. David Killigrew was my great uncle, you know."

"Yes, I know that, and he was a cousin of my mother's; but what I should really like to be able to define," he added, with a smile, "is the exact degree of relationship between you and me. There have been so many inter-marriages that I think it would puzzle the whole College of Heralds to state it correctly. How pretty the flowers are on this little grave; I see it is under your care as well as the tomb of David Killigrew."

Kate knelt down to rearrange a fallen knot of flowers, and Sir Oriel was bending to look at the name on the stone when his cousin said,—

"You know who lies here of course?"

"No."

Then he read aloud with unfeigned surprise,—

"Wilbraham Herbert Graystock, the only and dearly loved child of Sir Herbert Graystock and his wife Eleanor Graystock, who died May 8th, 187—, aged five months."

"My poor little baby cousin," he exclaimed, with something like a gasp.

"And my nephew, you remember," said Kate, quietly; "my only sister's only child. The poor darling died while his parents were at the Grove, which at that time belonged to Eleanor. They buried him here, and I think the loss of her baby broke my sister's heart."

Sir Oriel made no reply, for he had an unpleasant recollection of having felt anything but grief on hearing of the death of the infant, who was to him no more than any other child, except that it was one of the barriers that stood between him and rank and wealth.

And yet Kate spoke of the poor baby as though its death were still regarded by herself as a great grief; and he had very little doubt but that she was right in her surmise, and that the loss of the child had really hastened the death of its mother, if not of both its parents.

The train of thought thus suggested was so short that for a few minutes he could not speak,

and it was Kate who broke the painful silence by saying—

"I come here two or three times a week to look after the flowers and bring fresh ones, and if anything keeps me away the sexton's daughter takes my place. But I must not stay any longer now; I am going to walk to Flushing, and you came by boat, didn't you?"

"Yes; may I not take you back in the boat?"

"No, thank you, I prefer walking," was the reply.

"Then you will let me accompany you, I hope; it cannot be very safe for a lady to be wandering along country roads alone."

"Oh, I am safe enough," she replied, with a laugh; "but you can come if you like."

They walked out of the churchyard, after dismissing Ned Bray, and were going towards the high road when Sir Oriel asked—

"Isn't there some path or lane about here through which we can get near the water, and walk round Trefusis Point. The soft turf would be so much more pleasant than the dusty road."

"Yes; but it would be so very much farther round," responded Kate with a smile. "However, we will go that way if you wish it."

"I should like to try it, unless it will tire you too much," was the answer.

"Oh, nothing tires me," she replied, carelessly; and then she led the way in the direction he wished to go.

They were very silent during the long walk that lay for part of the way between the corn-fields and the sea, and then skirted the dense plantations of Trefusis.

There was hardly a sound to break the stillness of the air, except the low murmur of the waves breaking on the rocks below, and Kate felt inclined to give her newly-discovered cousin the credit for being a particularly stupid companion, for he had persuaded her to come nearly a couple of miles out of her way for the mere pleasure, it would seem, of walking dumbly by her side. At length she said—

"This is a very long way round; but we are not far from Flushing now."

"And you are tired!" he exclaimed, with sudden self-reproach; "how thoughtless of me. Do let us sit down for a few minutes; here is the trunk of a tree that looks as if it had been felled on purpose for us, and the place is beautifully shaded."

"I am not in the least tired," said Kate, with just the least sign of hesitation in her manner rather than her tone. "Are you?" she added, looking frankly at him.

"Yes, a little," he replied; but there was something in the tender, almost pleading look in his eyes that made Kate Killigrew's heart throb as it had never throbbed before, and the very unusual sensation made her more yielding than she might otherwise have been.

So she allowed her cousin to take her hand and lead her to a seat on the felled oak, and she did not reprove him, nor snatch her hand from his clasp, even though he retained it longer than was altogether necessary, and certainly held it as tightly as politeness would allow him to do.

Possibly, however, she did not observe it; for some strange feeling, for which she could not in any way account, had come over her and seemed to hold her almost spell-bound, so much so, indeed, that when Sir Oriel threw himself to rest on the grass at her feet, and gently pressed her fair hand to his lips, she never thought of resenting it, though she started the next moment as though she had been stung, as Mrs. Lanyon's voice close behind her was heard saying—

"Oh, Kate, how you have frightened me; you have been so long that I thought you must be lost or drowned, or tossed by a mad bull; or— or that something dreadful had happened. Dear me; I am afraid I am going to faint; Sir Oriel—"

She gasped and began to reel, then gracefully sank upon the sloping grass bank, taking very good care not to hurt herself as she fell.

But Sir Oriel Graystock was in much too great a rage at having his wooing thus rudely interrupted to be taken in by the widow's trans-

parent pretences, and he made no attempt to rush to her aid, though he had been so startled at her sudden appearance that he had sprung to his feet with a muttered imprecation, and now stood coldly staring at her.

Finding that she was not getting any sympathy, and knowing that she could not easily faint away altogether, Mrs. Lanyon pretended to rally by a supreme effort of will, and then she began again to utter her string of reproofs.

"I was waiting for you by the ferns, and was beginning to feel sure you were killed, when somebody from Mylor said they had seen you set out to walk round the point with a gentleman; but you know, dear, I couldn't quite believe them, and I was so terribly anxious that I came over to look for you; indeed, Kate, you ought to have let me come with you this morning."

"You know I never let you come with me to Mylor churchyard," said Miss Killigrew, angrily; "and I confess I do not understand why you are making such a fuss to-day. I am not later now than I have often been before!"

"But, dear Kate, you forget the narrow escape you had on Tuesday," returned the widow, applying her handkerchief to her eyes; "and when I knew you were over here with Sir Oriel I felt sure you must have met with some dreadful accident."

"I understood you to say, just now, that you didn't believe Miss Killigrew was here," interposed the young man, frowning savagely.

"Oh dear no, Sir Oriel—oh, dear me, how cruel you both are to me, and it was only love for dear Kate that made me so nervous about her. I could not imagine how you and she had met, and I felt sure you must have rescued her from some danger."

And the baffled widow began to cry like a big school-girl.

But a school-girl would certainly be young, and she might be graceful, and Mrs. Lanyon at the present moment was neither; and Sir Oriel was too thoroughly exasperated to let any feeling of gallantry rise uppermost in his mind. So turning to his cousin, he said,—

"Perhaps, as Mrs. Lanyon has been so very anxious about us, and she has imparted her anxiety to other people, we may as well hasten to satisfy our friends that we are very well able to take care of ourselves."

"Yes, perhaps we had," was the reply.

Then the cousins walked on side by side, while Mrs. Lanyon scrambled to her feet and followed them.

"I have overdone it this time," was the bitter thought that filled her heart. "Kate never looked so coldly at me before, and I do believe that, despite all the haste I made, he has proposed to her."

Very few words were uttered between them till they reached the ferry boat, when, seeing the number of market people in it, Sir Oriel called for another boat, and told the man to row them over to the market quay.

Here they got out, and walking up the principal street they reached the post-office just as Theo Martindale and Admiral Lanyon came out of the door, their faces beaming with pleasure and mischief.

The glowing faces of the trio somewhat sobered the two men, while the meeting with their friends made Sir Oriel and Kate try to look less annoyed than they still felt.

A few words of greeting passed between them; and then, as they neared the church steps, Kate held out her hand to Sir Oriel, saying—

"We shall see you to dinner, and you, too, Admiral; this is my nearest way; good-bye for the present."

Then the party divided, but as Theo Martindale turned to go with Kate Mrs. Lanyon saw a glance pass between the young man and her father-in-law, which she would have given very much to have been able to interpret.

It was well that she could not do so, however; otherwise, even at this hour, she might have thwarted them.

## CHAPTER V.

KATHERINE KILLIGREW was in the drawing-room dressed to receive her guests.

She was still in slight mourning, though David Killigrew had been dead much more than a year; but her black dress, composed of lace and satin, only made the pure whiteness of her complexion more vivid, while the beauty of her attire was enhanced by the white roses she wore in her dress and hair.

Miss Martindale was arrayed in a wonderful garment of pink brocaded silk as stiff as a board; her pelting and ruffles were of rare old lace, and she wore some quaint mosaic jewellery that seemed made to match the gorgeous hues of her costume.

It was in vain that Kate had tried times beyond number to induce the old lady to don for such occasions a less remarkable gown, to say nothing of its accessories; but Miss Martindale would wear her war-paint, and no consideration, short of a death in the family and consequent mourning, would induce her to attend a party in more sombre garments.

On the present occasion Kate looked at her aunt for a moment with a sigh, and then resigned herself to the inevitable.

Mrs. Lanyon's toilette for this evening had been very carefully studied, and was, without doubt, both youthful-looking and effective.

Her dress was of pale blue lame, which clung to her tall slender figure, and was trimmed with frills and flounces of cream lace, while a ruffle of the same cream-coloured material with pearls plentifully sprinkled upon it, hid the extreme bareness of her neck, and gave a certain amount of finish and style to the whole costume.

Crimson roses fastened this ruffle in front, while crimson and yellow roses were arranged in her hair, and there could be no doubt that at first sight the widow looked younger than her fair hostess.

That her complexion would not bear a very strong light upon it went for nothing; she was careful not to expose it to any such test; and she was so well satisfied with her appearance altogether that she failed to observe Katherine's extreme coldness towards her.

Theo Martindale watched the widow curiously, and marked the expression of pleased satisfaction that came over her face every time she could take a good look at herself in a glass, and every now and then he smiled slyly, as if at some joke which he had all to himself.

But the young man was restless, almost to the extent of being fidgety.

Sir Oriel Graystock arrived, and Kate received him with more reserve than was usual to her.

Then came Lieutenant Fermor, and the young hostess made up in cordiality to him for her coldness to her cousin.

"We have had a great disappointment," she said, addressing Fermor, but glancing at Sir Oriel. "We hoped to have had the beautiful Miss Tregothian here to dinner and to spend a few days with us, and she has written to say she cannot come. I am so vexed; for she would have been invaluable at the picnic to-morrow, and she is always so lively that she would have kept us in good spirits as long as she stayed here."

"I don't like lively girls," said Sir Oriel, quietly.

"Nor do I," chimed in Mrs. Lanyon. "Lively girls always seem to be striving for effect and trying to make other people appear dull. I like a girl to be sweet and dignified, and modest, such as my own Ethel, dear child, will be when she grows up. You have never seen my chick have you, Sir Oriel?"

The Baronet made no reply; in fact, he had no time to do so, for at that moment the drawing-room door was flung wide open, and the footman announced Admiral and Miss Lanyon.

"Oh, mother dear, aren't you glad to see me?" and a tall stout girl of eighteen summers, who might have passed unquestioned for five-and-twenty, flung herself boisterously upon Mrs. Lanyon's breast, kissed her effusively, then turned to Kate Killigrew, who was listening to the

Admiral's excuse for bringing his grand-daughter with so little ceremony.

"Of course you brought her here," said Kate, with a cordial smile. "Where should Ethel be but with her mother; and how you must have grown," she added, turning to the girl, who was only two or three years her junior. "I thought you were quite a little thing."

"I haven't been a little thing for the last six or seven years," returned Miss Lanyon, complacently; "but I was getting precious tired of being kept at school, I can tell you, and I think I should have run away and joined an equestrian troupe next week if grandfather had not luckily telegraphed for me to come to him. It was fortunate he was in time, wasn't it?"

She looked about her frankly enough as she said this, as though her family rather than she had met with a piece of good luck, and there was nothing very surprising in the granddaughter of an Admiral and the daughter of a clergyman thinking of circus life as an escape from the restrictions of school.

"It certainly was fortunate," replied Kate, gravely; "but dinner is served. Will you take my aunt, Sir Oriel? Theo, you will look after Miss Lanyon. Mr. Fermanor and Mrs. Lanyon, will you precede us?" and so saying she herself took the admiral's arm, and thus the party trooped into the dining-room.

Mrs. Lanyon had not spoken since the entrance of her daughter, but she had no longer any need of pearl powder to whiten her complexion, for she was pale with mortification and livid with unspoken rage; while Sir Oriel Graysstock, who had not been in the small plot, and had paid too little heed to the widow to remember whether she had one child or half a dozen, now said,—

"You were asking just now if I had seen your chicks, Mrs. Lanyon; how many have you?"

The woman thus addressed turned upon him such a look of hatred that the young man was startled, and Ethel Lanyon's rippling laughter did not dispel his anxiety as the girl broke in rather loudly,—

"Oh, my mother hasn't any other chick but me; to her intense disgust. I passed out of the fluffy stage ages ago. You would never have thought my mother had so old a daughter, would you?" she continued, addressing the baronet.

"I don't see why," replied Sir Oriel, quietly. "You are very much like your mother, except that you are rather less slender."

"That's not so pretty a compliment as our dancing master paid me the other day," said Ethel, with smiling self-conceit. "He said that Nature had been bountiful to me, and had showered upon me all her choicest gifts. Now wasn't that an elegant compliment?"

"Very," assented the baronet, with unruffled gravity.

"But I had a still more charming compliment paid me by the manager of the equestrian troupe I was thinking of joining," this gushing damsel continued. "He said—"

But Mrs. Lanyon could bear this no longer. The very presence of her daughter seemed like a personal wrong to her, while every word the girl uttered was like a cruel stab to her vanity and pride; for it showed how Ethel Lanyon must have been neglected when her highest ideals were dancing masters and circus managers.

"If you have nothing better to talk about than the compliments paid you by vulgar people, Ethel, you had better be silent," she said, with cold stern distinctness.

Ethel looked at her for a moment as the stern reproof fell upon her ears, then turned to Miss Martindale, who was looking at her rather severely, and very gracefully said to her,—

"I beg your pardon if I have been talking too much, but it is such a wonderful sensation to be really free from school, for the first time in my memory, that I am half wild with delight. I shall learn to behave myself better when I get more used to my freedom."

There was something so winning in the girl's open frankness and utter absence of conventionalities that the old lady's heart softened towards her, while Kate, out of sheer good nature, hastened to say,—

"The change must be very great for you, and I can quite understand that you feel a little excited in consequence; by the way, we are all going to Kynance Cove to-morrow, and there will be plenty of room for you in the carriage, if you will go with us."

"Oh, thank you; I shall enjoy it so very much," was the eager reply.

And she would have said much more, but a glance at her grandfather's face warned her to be silent.

The admiral was beginning to realize the very serious responsibility he had incurred in telegraphing for his granddaughter on the mere impulse of the moment, and without first of all obtaining the consent of her mother. Not that Mrs. Lanyon would have given it, though it was plainly apparent from the girl's own story that she would inevitably have got herself into some serious scrape if she had been kept at school much longer. So the old sailor felt that he must make the best of the situation; but he resolved to give Ethel some very strict orders as to her behaviour for the future.

"Had you a very fatiguing journey?" asked Theo Martindale, in a comparatively low tone, as he observed that the girl by his side was becoming restless, and would certainly not be long without committing some fresh *gaucherie* or other unless somebody charitably interposed.

"Oh, no; it was very pleasant," she replied, in a louder tone than was necessary.

Then, observing that her mother darted a quick angry look at her, she asked Theo, in a more subdued voice:

"Do you always speak in whispers in this house?"

"We are not speaking in whispers," he replied, quietly; "but if we all raised our voices as—forgive me for making the remark—you did just now, it would make a dreadful noise, while in this tone we can all talk without any of us interfering with the comfort of the rest."

"Oh, I see," was the slowly uttered assent. Then in a kind of stage whisper that could be distinctly heard by every person at table, she asked:

"Will there be lots of fun in going to Kynance to-morrow?"

"I hope so," was the reply.

"We are going in a big waggonette, aren't we?" was the next question.

"Yes."

"I wonder if I might sit on the box and help to drive; do you think they would let me?"

"I wouldn't make the suggestion if I were you," said Theo in a low tone, but with a very solemn countenance.

"But why not; there is no harm in driving, is there? Oh, I should so like it. Do you know I believe I could drive tandem as well as any man!"

She said this in such an earnest tone of simple faith that Theo Martindale felt called upon to exercise all his self-control to prevent himself from screaming with laughter; while Mrs. Lanyon, who could not help overhearing her daughter's unlucky observations, was nearly beside herself with rage.

It certainly was mortifying for a woman, so close upon forty as she was, and yet who was so well-preserved that but for her angry frowns she might have passed for five-and-twenty, to be suddenly confronted with this very mature and still more objectionable daughter.

Even Theo Martindale, who certainly did not love her, felt some compassion for the widow, and he tried to repress Miss Ethel's exuberance to the utmost extent of his power.

"What a time those unlucky governesses of hers must have had," he thought compassionately before the dinner was quite over; "and what a precious handful the admiral and her mother will have now."

At this point the signal was given for the ladies to rise from table and leave the room; but Ethel showed no inclination to stir.

Theo whispered a few words to her, but instead of instantly rising she said:

"But I don't want to go yet, I haven't finished my peach."

Then, seeing the blank look of *serio-comic* dismay on the young man's face, she turned to look at her grandfather, and little as she knew his countenance she saw that he was terribly annoyed with her. So she sprang to her feet, but instead of taking her discomfiture in silence, as almost any other girl would have done, she threw up her hands in an attitude of despair as she exclaimed:

"There! I've done something dreadful again. I know I have."

And so saying, she literally ran out of the room.

"This is awful!" groaned the admiral, wiping the perspiration from his hot forehead. "I had no idea she was such an uncivilized hoyden, or I think I should have left her at school for the rest of her days."

"Oh, she'll tone down in time," said Sir Oriel consolingly; "her mother will pretty quickly take her impulsive ways out of her."

"Mrs. Lanyon seemed to be utterly dumbfounded at her daughter's arrival," observed Fermanor; "and, for my part, I certainly was astonished to see a great girl like that put in her appearance in such a character, for Mrs. Lanyon always gave me and everybody else the impression that her daughter was a mere child."

"Yes, that was a nice little piece of fiction that she kept up all along, and meant to keep up still," responded the admiral drily, "and I'm almost sorry that I interfered; but the girl had had so much of school that it suddenly occurred to me the other evening that I'd put a stop to it, and I sent for her without consulting her mother, and a nice hole I have got myself into, it seems. By Jove, what is that?"

He might well ask the question, for something like a scene, and that a very noisy one, was evidently taking place in the drawing-room.

## CHAPTER VI.

"How dared you leave school without my permission!" demanded Mrs. Lanyon fiercely of her daughter, as the girl followed the other ladies into the drawing-room, her temper by no means unruined.

"Law! ma, I'm not a child," retorted Ethel, flinging herself lumpily into an arm-chair. "I should have left school of my own accord in a week or two if grandfather hadn't sent for me; but as he did telegraph for me to come, of course I came. I should have done so all the same if you had said I wasn't to."

And Miss Ethel Lanyon smiled as she made this statement, as though it were just the right and proper thing to say under the circumstances. Her mother could scarcely contain herself with fury, and she turned to Kate Killigrew, hoping to invoke her aid in enforcing her maternal authority.

But Miss Killigrew was deeply interested in a novel she had previously been reading, and old Miss Martindale had settled herself in her own particular arm-chair with a handkerchief thrown over her face, intent upon taking her customary "forty winks," before the gentleman came in; and mother and daughter were thus tacitly left to "fight it out" without any assistance from outsiders.

"Your grandfather had no right to send for you without consulting me, and I shall insist upon your going back to school to-morrow morning," said Mrs. Lanyon, trying to speak with calmness and authority.

"You may insist upon what you like, mother, but I shan't go," was the coolly defiant response. "I've had quite enough of school, and I won't have any more of it, so I tell you. I am going to live with my grandfather, so I shan't be always with you to let people know how old you are. I dare say you are very sorry that I came into the world at all; but as I am here I mean to stop as long as I can, and to make myself as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. Some girls would almost break their hearts because their mother had so little motherly love for them; but now I have seen you, me, I'm not likely to do that."

The taunt stung Mrs. Lanyon, but it did not soften her.

She felt defeated and baffled ; she knew, also, that she had made herself ridiculous ; and though she could not retrieve the past she was determined not to patiently accept her altered circumstances, for it was quite certain that with such a very much grown-up daughter she could no longer pass for a young woman.

" You are like your father," sneered the mother malignantly ; " insolent, ill-bred, and selfish to the last degree."

Before the words were well out of her mouth, she regretted she had uttered them, for her daughter was more like a good-natured savage than a well-disciplined bread-and-butter mew, such as modern boarding schools produce ; and the girl now sprang to her feet, tall and voluptuous in form, but with every limb and feature quivering with passionate indignation.

" Shame on you, mother ! " she cried, vehemently ; " shame on you to speak of my dead father like that. You who made his life miserable, you who disappointed his dearest hopes, you — and from loud, passionate tones she dropped her voice to a threatening whisper as she hissed — " who I have heard it hinted, helped to shorten his days."

She extended her hand with an accusing gesture as she uttered these last words ; and Mrs. Lanyon, shrinking back in affright, glanced towards the door, and saw her father-in-law upon the threshold.

Her first impulse as her daughter spoke was to rush to the old man and upbraid him for the course he had taken ; but when she saw that he must have heard what Ethel had said the mother threw up her arms, and flinging herself upon a couch, began to sob and cry as though she were overcome with violent hysteria.

It was Kate Killigrew's turn to interfere now.

She, the actual if not the nominal hostess, had put up with quite as much noise and annoyance as she felt inclined to submit to ; and as she now quietly laid down her book she walked over to the widow's side, and said firmly though quietly,

" You had better go to your own room, Mrs. Lanyon, until you feel calmer. I would not on any consideration have invited my cousin to dine here to-night if I could have supposed he would have to witness a scene like this."

Mrs. Lanyon pulled herself together as though she had been a piece of mechanism made to expand or contract at pleasure by simply touching a spring ; and, hastily drying her eyes, she said in a low tone,—

" I am quite calm now ; it shan't occur again I promise you."

Then she went over to a distant corner of the long room and opening a large volume of engravings she soon became, to all appearances, completely absorbed in its contents.

As for Ethel Lanyon she threw off her tragic attitude almost as soon as Katherine spoke, and walking over to the piano she sat down and began to play.

Music was certainly not this young lady's forte, but she could play a rattling dance tune or a lively march, and anything at this moment was a welcome diversion to Kate, who perceived that the gentlemen had come hurriedly from the dining-room attracted by the noise occasioned by the quarrel between mother and daughter.

Being in the drawing-room they could not very well leave it again, and Theo Martindale with Ralph Fermor made their way to the piano while Sir Oriel took a chair by the side of Kate, and the admiral seated himself near old Miss Martindale.

Mrs. Lanyon was thus left alone to recover from her agitation, to learn to face the present, and to make up her mind as to what steps she should take for the future.

Theo left the piano after a while and sat down and watched the widow, who was trying very hard to regain semblance of good temper and to make the best of the situation.

" It's rather hard on her after all," thought the young fellow a few seconds later ; " she didn't expect her uncompromising duckling, and she

doesn't get on with her at all. I'll see if I can't patch up something like a truce between them, and complete reconciliation may afterwards follow."

Then he took a cup of tea and carried it over to Mrs. Lanyon, and seating himself near her, said :

" You don't look very well this evening."

" No ; how can I be well ? " she asked plaintively. " Isn't it enough to break my heart to hear that girl, and to see her behave as she is doing ? "

" Really, I must say I think you are taking a singular view of matters, Mrs. Lanyon," expostulated the young man ; " Miss Lanyon is your daughter, I presume."

" Yes, unhappily—I wish she was not."

" That may be, but you cannot alter facts, and frankly I think she has something to complain of in having been kept at school so long, and I am afraid it was not a very well-chosen one."

" But what could I do ? " asked the widow, helplessly. " I am not rich, and I have no house of my own, and—and Ethel was no companion to me at any time, and now—oh, what shall I do with her ? "

" I should imagine that the Admiral intends his granddaughter to live with him," suggested Theo ; " but whatever arrangements may be made, it is scarcely the time to discuss them now. I heard Kate expressing her doubts as to whether or not our little excursion can come off to-morrow. Of course, if you object to your daughter's presence, the proposed visit to Kyne-

ness may as well be given up at once."

" Oh, no ; of course I must not let my sorrows interfere with the pleasure of others," said Mrs. Lanyon, with the sweet resignation of a martyr.

" I must not think of myself ; I must bear my own burden. I don't feel equal to talking to

Kate on the subject myself ; but will you assure her that there shall be nothing unpleasant said or done by me to-morrow ? "

" I will, and—if I may venture a suggestion—I think you could soon mould your daughter to be more like yourself if you were to have a little patience with her. I fear you must have been deceived as to the class and character of the school you sent her to."

" Yes ; I am quite sure I was. I will try to follow your suggestion, Mr. Martindale. It is very kind of you to take so much interest in my daughter and me."

She drooped her eyelids as she spoke.

For the life of her she could not help coqueting with this man, whose admiration she had vainly sought to win ; and upon whom, in spite of all her seeming failures, she was still ready to believe she had made some impression.

The very hope of conquest put her in a good temper ; and, though she would have much preferred winning Sir Oriel to this comparatively poor man, still she was quite conscious of the fact that she had no time to lose ; and though there might be as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it she was beginning to fear lest her net when drawn in would always be empty.

So she smiled plaintively and sighed, and allowed Theo Martindale to bring her a second cup of tea, and before he returned Ralph Fermor joined her, and she was seen talking with much animation to both of the young men, and she related some bright, witty little stories which Theo had certainly heard before ; but she told them so well that he was quite content to listen to them as though they now fell upon his ears for the first time.

## CHAPTER VII.

AT ten o'clock the next morning the brake with its four horses was at the door, and Kate Killigrew with her aunt and Mrs. Lanyon were just getting into it, attended by Sir Oriel Graystock, Ralph Fermor, and Theo Martindale when Admiral Lanyon and his granddaughter hurriedly came up the avenue that led to the house.

The old sailor's face was flushed with anger, for he was the soul of punctuality, and the party had been timed to start at half-past nine.

" Good-morning, Admiral ; we were going to

call at your house on our way to see if anything had happened to you," said Kate, kindly.

" It would have served us right if you had gone without us," said the old sailor, trying hard to clear the cloud of anger from his face. " But it's the first and the last time that I've been or shall be unpunctual. If I'd known that Ethel was going to take so long figuring before the glass I should have come away without her, and I'll do it the next time."

" I'm sure I haven't been so very long dressing," pouted Ethel. " I couldn't get ma's dress to fit me without so much pinning and management, and at school we girls always helped each other to dress, and I'd nobody this morning to help me."

Kate said nothing, for she felt annoyed at the whole party having been kept waiting by this girl's dilatoriness ; but Mrs. Lanyon said quietly, though with some severity,—

" You must learn to dress without help, and to dress in time, Ethel, or, in future, you will certainly be left behind. You have no right to tax the good nature of other people as you have done this morning."

Ethel looked round for sympathy, and had seen an encouraging smile upon any face she would at once have become rebellious.

But the gentlemen were talking to each other, or to the ladies, and all except her mother carefully avoided looking at her, so there was no help for the girl but submission, and she said rather ungraciously,—

" Well, I'll try not to be late again."

Then she intimated her desire to ride on the front seat, but here again she was, as she termed it, " put down " by her mother, and she had, therefore, to get in behind with the rest of the ladies.

It is true that Sir Oriel and the admiral were both of them satisfied to be among the ladies while the two other men were on the box seat ; but this was no consolation, since the baronet had taken little or no notice of her on the previous night, and seemed even less inclined to devote himself to her amusement this morning, while her grandfather was still too angry with her to pay her much attention, and she was like her mother in one characteristic at least — she hungered after the notice of every man she met.

Now Miss Ethel had, to use her own expression, been " pretty well sat upon " since she left the Grove on the previous evening, and she was never less disposed to efface herself than on the present occasion.

Directly they reached home her grandfather had talked to her seriously, and tried hard to impress her with a sense of the enormity of her conduct, and the absolute necessity of conciliating her mother.

The next morning, almost before she had opened her eyes, her mother came into her bedroom, and, though she showed every desire to be as kind and amiable as she could to her trouble-some daughter, she lectured Ethel so severely about her behaviour that the girl, though she said little, felt strongly inclined to rebel, especially when assured that if she did not soon change for the better she would be sent away to school again.

However, the young lady's fast rising anger was disarmed for the time by the unexpected present of a very elegant costume that happened to be a little too large for Mrs. Lanyon herself, and that lady then returned to the Grove.

After all this lecturing Ethel had used up the last grain of her grandfather's patience by the way in which she had kept him and his friends waiting for her, and his remarks on the subject had been more forcible than flattering.

The drive from Falmouth to Kynance affords some splendid views of fine scenery, and had Ethel been on the box seat she would have thoroughly enjoyed the ride but, as it was, she chose to feel herself ill-used and to look sulky, while she watched Kate Killigrew, Sir Oriel Graystock, and her mother, who sat on the opposite seat to her.

There was plenty of room in the great carriage, which was constructed to hold eight persons

comfortably, and ten at a push, and as it was there were only six.

Mrs. Lanyon had taken the further seat on one side with old Miss Martindale facing her, but she had counted on having the baronet next to her, while she thought Kate or her own daughter would be on his other side.

In this, however, she was mistaken ; the admiral took his seat next to Miss Martindale, Kate sat next to herself, Ethel sat by her grandfather and next the door, and Sir Oriel faced the school-girl and sat next to his cousin.

The consequence was that the widow could not talk to the baronet without leaning before Kate, who sat between them.

This was mortifying, but there was some compensation in the fact that Theo Martindale was on the box just above her, and she was able to keep up a kind of whispered flirtation with him.

"I am told by grandfather to model my manners and behaviour upon the same lines as my mother," reflected Ethel, bitterly, as she watched her parent ; "and my mother's sole aim and object in life seems to be to get as much attention and attract as much admiration as she can. Well, perhaps I can imitate her so far."

She was soon roused from this unpleasant frame of mind, however ; for when they reached the wide desolate-looking waste called Goonhilly Down the carriage was pulled up, while Theo Martindale alighted to gather some of the pretty white heath (*Bryos vagans*) that is said to be the rarest and most beautiful of all our English heaths, and that grows only in this part of Cornwall.

He handed a large bunch into the carriage for general inspection, and then he selected a few sprays, and, to the widow's intense vexation, carried them round to her daughter, observing, as he handed them to the delighted girl.—

"The view from the box-seat is very much finer than you can get from where you are, Miss Lanyon ; and as we are now quite out of sight of Mrs. Grundy I will change seats with you, if you like."

Ethel glanced at Kate, who said, kindly.—

"You had better accept the offer. Mr. Fermor will take every care of you, I am sure."

Ethel needed no further encouragement, and in a few seconds she had clambered up to the box before Theo could help her.

"What a big untrained child she is," said Kate, in a low tone to Sir Oriel. "I do believe her faults are mostly on the surface, and that she really wishes to behave well."

"I am sure of it," assented the baronet, "and she will rapidly improve under your good influence. No amount of precept is equal to example."

Kate made no reply, but she blushed prettily at the implied compliment, and half turned away her head.

They were not very long in reaching Kynance Cove, one of the most wildly picturesque spots on the coast.

A steep path through a notch or chasm in the serpentine cliffs led down to the shore ; it was cumbered with huge broken fragments of the same beautiful rock—the remains, it is said, of a cave that had fallen in ages ago—and the difficulty of scrambling over these water-worn fragments was such that even the most active of the ladies required considerable assistance.

Through no intentional neglect upon the part of anyone—but partly because Ethel was attracting everybody's attention, more or less, by laughing merrily at the way in which they all rolled and stumbled over smooth and slipping pieces of serpentine rock not big enough to climb but still too large to be lightly stepped over, and partly from the fact that old Miss Martindale required a good deal of help—it just happened that Mrs. Lanyon was left to take care of herself.

Under ordinary circumstances she would have thought little or nothing of this, and would have taken capital care of her own ankles ; but several things had, during the last few days, conspired to make her particularly jealous of attention

paid to others, and proportionately ready to consider any act of the kind an intentional slight to herself.

Unconscious of the smouldering rage they were leaving behind them, the rest of the party made their way blithely enough round the corner of the rock to the land-locked amphitheatre which they had come to visit, and that was now deserted by the waves.

The smooth yellow sand was firm and pleasant to walk upon, but the guide warned them they would not have much time to spare, for the tide would soon return, and while they thought themselves in perfect safety their retreat might be cut off by the incoming waters.

This caution filled Ethel with wild excitement ; there was real danger, she was told, but she did not believe it.

As she looked at the mighty masses of black rock, veined with green and white, and splashed with red, polished by the almost perpetual friction of the waves, and now glistening in the sunlight like gigantic gems, she could not realize that the tide would soon leave little but their summits visible.

The others might waste their time in visiting the caves, but she made up her mind to gather wild asparagus from the very top of Asparagus Island itself, and pay a visit to the more easily accessible "Devil's Bellows" on her way.

Her wild spirits seemed to infect Theo Martindale, and he went scrambling up the rocks with her, getting over such rough, slippery places that Admiral Lanyon, old sailor as he was, more than once called out to warn them to be careful. But Ethel only laughed.

The towering black cliffs which lined the shore, and the fringes of white foam with which the restless waves continually adorned their feet, exercised a kind of fascination upon the emancipated school-girl—a fascination that was not altogether devoid of terror.

And, meanwhile, Kate Killigrew was thinking that this was the very happiest day of her life.

Many times before had she visited Kynance Cove, but never had its weird savage beauty struck her so forcibly as it did to-day.

This might have been because the weather was fine, and she was in exceptionally good spirits ; or it might have been because Sir Oriel Graystock showed his deep and strong regard for her in so many ways, and in such an unmistakable manner.

That she liked her cousin Kate would have been very ready to admit, but she was not so well-prepared to confess even to herself that she loved him.

For she had only known him personally a few days, and, though she had often heard of him, the impression left upon her mind by the reports that had reached her was that he was hard, overbearing, and tyrannical, besides being grossly selfish and intensely mean.

That these reports had come from an unfriendly source, of course, she knew, and she could now judge for herself that most of the charges were unfounded ; still the convictions of months cannot be eradicated in a day, and Kate was seriously alarmed at finding that she was very nearly in love with a man of whom such harsh things had been said.

When a girl admits to herself that she is very nearly in love with a man we may be certain that she has not very far to go before she is quite so ; while Sir Oriel himself was so far gone that only the dread of a refusal if he ventured to propose on so short an acquaintance kept him from speaking.

These "two lovers lost in a dream" failed to take much notice of what became of their friends ; indeed, they seemed rather inclined to avoid the others, and they loitered about studying and admiring the wonderful beauties of the Cove from various points of view until one of the many tourists who were sight-seeing like themselves warned them that retreat would soon be cut off by the incoming tide.

"Don't let us lose any time," said Kate, nervously, as she saw that her cousin was still inclined to loiter. "You don't know how treacherous the tide is here ; while we think

we are quite safe, and have plenty of time before us, we may be surrounded with deep water, and no boat can come to our help ; indeed, I don't think there is a boat on the coast nearer than Polperro."

"Yet I feel reluctant to leave this place," replied Sir Oriel, glancing in mute admiration at the wild beauty around him. "I seem to have an uncomfortable presentiment of evil, like a cold chill upon me ; I hope that nothing disagreeable is going to happen. Do you believe in presentiments ?"

"I believe that you and I will get a good drenching if we don't get drowned, unless you come on faster," said Kate, anxiously.

Then, seeing she was really in earnest, her cousin quickened his steps, and the couple managed to reach a place of safety with nothing more serious to complain of than a few splashes.

"I suppose the admiral or your aunt has met some friends," remarked Sir Oriel, as he and Kate scrambled up the steep incline from the Cove towards the spot which had been selected for the luncheon.

She glanced in the direction indicated, and saw a group of people composed of some of her own party, and some strangers who were in conversation with them, and she said carelessly.

"Yes, I wonder whom they have met—perhaps they are friends of mine ; let us make haste and join them."

Sir Oriel sighed, but he had no reasonable objection to offer ; and then the two cousins went on together to meet what might be an element of discord between them, and of danger to both of them.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"MISS KATE, how charmed I am that we meet once again," said a tall, handsome, military-looking man, as he took the young lady's hand, and held it in a firm, warm pressure.

"Max !" exclaimed Kate Killigrew, in much surprise, and not without some little agitation. "I—I am almost out of breath with climbing this steep cliff," she gasped ; then, slowly recovering, she introduced the stranger to her cousin as Herr von Rubenstein.

The two men bowed as coldly and stiffly as if they had each swallowed a ramrod that refused to be digested, and then Kate said,—

"Who is up there with my aunt besides our own party ?"

And she looked towards a group of people on the hill, for as yet she was still far from the top of the ascent, and the young German had come to meet her.

"There is my sister, Bertha, and her friend, Madame Myer, and there is the Count von Krutzen. We had come here to see the lovely scenery, and lo ! whom should we find seated on a block of stones, very sad, and with tears in her eyes, but Mrs. Lanyon."

"But how came you to know Mrs. Lanyon ?" asked Kate, in surprise. "I had never heard of her when I met you three years ago."

"Three years ! it is so long ! Then he sighed. But as no answer was made to this remark he seemed to recollect himself, and said,—

"Mrs. Lanyon ! Ah, yes, I knew her in London a long time ago. She fancied she could write books, and she was studying German, and I met her again in Germany. One does so often meet people one knows. The world is so small one cannot lose one's self or one's friends."

"Then you found Mrs. Lanyon just now shedding tears," returned Kate, dryly. "Had she met with any misfortunes ?"

"No, I think not, except that she was alone," was the quiet reply ; "but her tears soon gave place to smiles," he went on, with veiled irony. "And then her father came up to us, and I was introduced, and then I had the felicity of knowing that you were near me."

"Mrs. Lanyon's father-in-law you mean, I suppose ?" said Kate, coldly.

Then she turned to Sir Oriel, and remarked,—

"Our party seems to be a good bit scattered,

I hope none of them have been thoughtless enough to remain in the Cove until the tide overtook them."

"Surely not," responded her cousin.

But the bare suggestion made them turn to look back, and then an exclamation of terror escaped from Kate's lips.

"Look there!" she gasped; "look over on Asparagus Island; don't you see a man and a woman there?"

"Yes, I see them; they seem comfortable enough," replied Sir Oriel, with a smile.

"Comfortable!" groaned Kate, "the water must now be many feet deep at the place where we got splashed, and there they are sitting quite unconscious of their situation. What is to be done?"

"I don't see what can be done, unless they wait for the next tide," replied Sir Oriel, with a troubled look on his face. "The top of the island can never be covered with water!"

"I don't know, but I suppose not," was the doubtful reply; "and happily the sea is now comparatively calm. Ah! here comes Mr. Fermor, perhaps he can tell us what to do."

A few minutes later Ralph Fermor joined them.

He had been picking up some specimens of the beautifully veined serpentine, and had not observed what had become of the rest of his party till he recognized some of them on the hill.

Then he had set off to join them. Kate's question as to whether the great mass of rock in the centre would be covered by the tide made him turn to look at it.

"No," he replied, slowly; "I don't think it is ever quite covered, but Martindale and Miss Lanyon will be jolly miserable sitting up there without anything to eat or drink until the tide goes out again, but unless they get in a flurry I should think they are safe enough; in any case, we can't help them."

Then he turned to continue the ascent, and the others followed him, observing that the couple on the island were still seated in a kind of natural hollow, their faces turned seaward, and to all appearances as much at their ease as if they had been seated in a bower of roses a hundred miles away from old Oceanus and his tides.

Kate and her cavaliers soon reached the summit of the Tor Balk, or "Tar Box," as the people about there call the lofty hill which bounds Kynance Cove on the side towards the Lizard, and there they found Admiral Lanyon, with the two ladies temporarily in his charge, and the German ladies and gentleman to whom his daughter-in-law had introduced them.

Kate Killigrew's greeting of Bertha von Rubenstein was friendly though not effusive, and she was calmly polite to the other two members of their party, to whom she was formally introduced.

She was about to speak of her anxiety with regard to the couple on the island when Miss Martindale said:

"My dear Kate, I have ordered the servants to get the luncheon ready at once, and I have just been telling Fraulein von Rubenstein that we shall be very glad if she and her friends will join us. I remember that the Rubensteins were friends of yours at one time," she added in a lower tone.

Kate's face flushed painfully, but she bowed gracefully, intimating that the guests were welcome; but Sir Oriel Graystock could not help observing the start of surprise which Bertha von Rubenstein gave when the idea dawned upon her mind that Kate Killigrew was really the hostess on this occasion.

Her anxiety about Theo and Ethel was too great, however, to allow Kate to sit down quietly with her friends, and she anxiously told the admiral and Mrs. Lanyon what troubled her. The old sailor was as much worried at what he saw as she herself was, but Ethel's mother, after looking coolly at her hopeful offspring through an opera glass, remarked:

"They'll get very hungry and very cold before they can join us, but they are safe enough if they don't lose their heads."

Then she turned to look at the luncheon which was being spread out upon the white cloth laid on the grass by the well-trained servants.

"Do you know we have been what you English call awfully sold by finding we could not get anything to drink more palatable than tea or lemonade at that shed down there which the good people do call a refreshment room," said Max von Rubenstein with a grimace, as he caught sight of some golden-necked bottles in the hands of a servant.

"Oh, we know what to expect," replied Kate; "and we always take care to be well provisioned when we come here; but I do wish we could communicate with those two on the rocks. I am so much afraid Miss Lanyon will get frightened and perhaps lose her presence of mind, and then we don't know what might happen."

"They do at last see the fix they are in," said Sir Oriel, who had been intently watching the couple, "and by Jove, they mean to climb down the rock; what an absurd thing to do. They are perfectly safe where they are. Here, Fermor, suppose we go down to the cove and ascertain if any help can be sent to them."

"All right," was the reply; and then the two young men set off at as rapid a pace as the nature of the ground would permit.

"Who is that gentleman?" asked Bertha von Rubenstein of Kate, as her eyes followed the young Baronet.

"That is Sir Oriel Graystock, my cousin," was the reply.

"Ah; a pretty name; and he is rich, of course!" was the next question.

"He is not poor," was the reply, "but I don't think he is very rich."

Kate Killigrew's previous acquaintance with the Von Rubensteins was very simple.

Three years ago, when she was between eighteen and nineteen, she had spent several months in a small German town with a distant relative of her mother's.

At this time, her sister, who was several years older than herself, and Mr. David Killigrew were both living; and Kate, instead of being a great heiress, was only possessed of a modest income of three hundred a year.

Here she met the Von Rubensteins, who lived in an old half-ruined castle, and here poor Kate learnt the first sad lesson of love.

At first things went smoothly enough, for Kate was believed to be much more wealthy than she really was, and Max was very genuinely in love with the fair English maiden; but when marriage came to be spoken of, and settlements were talked about, it became only too evident that the Von Rubensteins were bitterly disappointed; and Max, yielding to the representations of his family, broke off the engagement.

Immediately after this Kate returned to England, and then followed the death of her sister, in consequence of which she became possessed of the Grove; and the death of other relatives, particularly old David Killigrew, had made her the possessor of landed property and money to a very considerable amount; so that she was now an exceedingly wealthy woman.

Oddly enough, the Von Rubensteins had come across her name in connection with some mines; and as Max had failed to make a wealthy alliance in the interval brother and sister both thought the chance of renewing the old engagement with Kate Killigrew might be worth trying.

There had been nothing unpleasant in the rupture between the young people beyond the disagreeable question of money, and as Max seemed to yield to his family, and to be a victim to the prudence of his relatives rather than to his own cupidity, he and his sister felt that they could seek out Kate and renew her acquaintance with a very good grace.

They had not intended to call at the Grove for a day or two, trusting to some chance and informal meeting, though they scarcely expected that meeting to come about so soon as it had done.

(Continued on page 307.)

It is said that the best walking pace is seventy-five steps per minute.

## AS IT FELL UPON A DAY.

### CHAPTER XIX.

ANNE HUNLEY had a feeling of nervousness amounting to pain upon her as she went down from Rachel's room to join her mother and Bastian; she dreaded the meeting between Rachel and her cousin.

Anne was rather given to judge Rachel's acts by a standard of her own imagination; she was, in truth, very far indeed from knowing or understanding her brilliant young sister as she really could be.

Her nervousness on this occasion was quite unnecessary. She had not been in the drawing-room more than five minutes before Rachel followed her.

Lady Castletown, save that she was a little quieter in manner, as befitting the anxiety she had sustained over Eleanor, was exactly her same old self with Bastian; she let her hand rest in his a moment, and looked at him half quizzically, half impertinently—in a way that was peculiarly her own, and very dear to him.

"So you have come back as mysteriously as you went! What have you been doing, Bastian, do confess! Do you know I have been consumed with curiosity, and I have imagined all sorts and kinds of things."

Anne drew her breath more comfortably as she heard this speech—she even laughed slightly.

"And you in your turn can imagine what Rachel's imagination has been," she said to Bastian; "I had no intention of being mysterious!"

Bastian answered; his voice and manner was grave, almost to constraint; the news Anne had given him had been a great shock. He, felt he hardly knew why exactly, as if he were standing on the edge of a precipice.

Rachel gave him a little blow with her fan.

"Now you have to devote yourself to dear Bunny for the whole week she is in town. Look at her; she is prepared to adore you, although you have been such a monster, and have neglected her so shamefully all this long time."

Mrs. Langridge made a tender depreciation of this. The near presence of her boy had worked a sort of illumination in her face.

"Oh, no, Rachel, dear," she said, most eagerly, "you must not say that. It is—"

"No one says 'no' to me when I make a remark in my own house. Please remember this of all you—I am the most tyrannical creature in the world. Is dinner never going to be served?" Rachel cried, as, with a sudden sigh and change of manner from nonsense to impatience, she crossed the room to one of the windows.

Bastian Lithgow was looking at her with something like consternation. His ears were tuned to know the inflexion and suggestion that lay beneath every note of her sweet childish voice; his eyes to read the meaning of every expression that travelled across the lovely face; yet, often as he had studied and grieved over the strange emotions, the ill-repressed bitterness and sorrow that her former life had been wont to bring, he had never seen her lips wear the expression that now sat upon them; he had never seen those heavy dark lines round her eyes; he had never, in fact, known her in her present mood.

He gathered in that very first instant that all that had happened since he went away had been a tremendous mental shock to her.

He could easily imagine that the loss of Eleanor was more than a pain to her. He had not studied Rachel so long and so closely without understanding her capacity for joy and for sorrow.

He had been unable to get at any comfortable solution of the trouble from Anne, simply because Anne had so little to tell.

He was terribly upset about the business; it was a shock to him to remember that it was his hand that had indirectly worked this trouble.

If he had not been instrumental in bringing Eleanor Foster to the house Rachel would have been spared the annoyance and the pain she was now suffering.

He looked across the room to where she stood, a lovely little figure in her black dinner gown with shimmering jet making a sort of will-o'-the-wisp effect in the mixture of twilight and firelight, and he moved suddenly over to her.

" You will be able to give me a few minutes quiet chat after dinner, Rachel?" he said questioningly, as he stood beside her.

She whisked herself round impatiently, as it were.

" Oh ! I am so sorry, Bastian, dear," she said in that same wonderful pretence of her usual manner that was so cleverly done as to deceive almost him. " I am *horribly* sorry, but as soon as dinner is over I shall have to rush away ; I have promised to go and sit with Mrs. Hamilton for an hour this evening ; she is so ill, poor dear, and then you will have to take Bunny home quite early ; she is all tired now as she can be ! "

Bastian was silent an instant. Her manner was terribly painful to him. It was the first time he had ever known her to shrink from him. Her old indifference had been hurtful, but this was a thousand times worse.

" I think all the same I must ask you to give me one moment, Rachel. The matter is imperative ! "

Rachel yawned slightly.

" Oh ! " she said, with a repetition of that impatient sigh, " how tiresome you are, Bastian. Of course, I know you want to give me your version about Eleanor, but really I don't see that it is quite necessary. She has gone away, poor child, and there is an end of the matter ; except that of course I mean to do all and anything I can for her. Anne has told me that you imagine that clerk, Mr. Robinson, can tell us where she is. Please get me her address. For the rest, I am satisfied."

" But I am not," Bastian answered her very sharply, and there was a tone in his voice Rachel had never heard before ; it was stern, cold, authoritative.

" You must remember, Rachel, that to a certain extent I am in a sense responsible for Miss Foster, not merely because I introduced her to you, and got her an engagement in your house, but because I — "

" Ah ! " Rachel cried, interrupting him very casually, " dinner at last ! Go and give your arm to your mother. Anne, I must be your cavalier. We are quite old friends, you and I, so I can treat you without any ceremony ! "

Mrs. Langridge laughed heartily at Rachel's nonsense, but neither Bastian nor Anne were ready to respond to her frivolity.

The man obeyed her without another word. He went up to his mother, led her down the broad staircase, bending his tall head to catch her words with an expression on his face that stirred Rachel's heart, till a lump seemed to come into her throat, and a mist rose over her eyes.

Those words he had been saying, and the tone in his voice had run like a sword thrust through her sensitive, over-burdened heart.

She translated them merely as a reproach ; a reproach for her callousness as to Eleanor's fate, and though she knew she deserved this reproach, she resented it most bitterly.

" It is all as evident as can be," she said to herself. " What on earth could have induced Anne to imagine that idiotic idea about me ! He likes me—oh ! yes, of course, anyone can see that, but love—and for me ! Anne must have been out of her senses to have thought such a thing ! "

She sat at the head of her table, and she laughed and chatted, and talked more nonsense than she had ever talked, but in all the days of her old misery she had never known such mental suffering as she knew to-night.

Mrs. Langridge was the only one who really enjoyed the dinner. She saw nothing amiss. Enough for her that she had her dear boy near her, and that her pleasure was being shared by Rachel and Anne ; for next to Bastian the two girls were the largest sharers of her love and tenderness.

Anne, shrewd as she was, was, of course, not deceived by Rachel's manner, but she attributed it to the conglomeration of circumstances that had arisen, and she speedily assured herself that

with Bastian's return everything would be smoothed down again.

The suggestion that had worked such havoc in Rachel's mind, that Bastian had something to do with Eleanor's trouble, was really so ridiculous to Anne Hamilton when she recalled it, that she did not let herself dwell upon it any longer.

It was left for Bastian to suffer as Rachel was suffering. His pride had been strangely hurt by her manner.

Without dreaming or imagining in the slightest degree the odious thought that had been planted in her mind against him, he felt that she did judge him a little severely, and though from any one else such a judgment might have been just, from Rachel he held it to be most unjust.

He had been so careful to explain to her his one and only motive in bringing Eleanor's case to her knowledge. He had again and again impressed on her that he had no personal knowledge of Miss Foster, and she had fully accepted this statement.

Surely, he said to himself, after such an explanation Rachel should have acquainted him of being an accessory to the annoyance that had come. Yet it was only too evident she put the blame on him.

Her point blank refusal to discuss the matter with him left him in a very disagreeable position, and he could not quite understand her reason for assuming such an attitude.

He ate his dinner almost in silence.

" Bastian is such a chatterbox ! " Rachel cried lightly once. " Wake up, sir ! tear your thoughts from the lovely, dusky-eyed maid of Spain, and give us some of your attention."

Bastian coloured and laughed faintly.

" I believe I am a little tired," he said hurriedly.

Mrs. Langridge was immediately anxious.

" And I am quite sure you have one of your nasty headaches, my darling," she said ; " you look so pale, and your eyes are quite heavy."

" Bastian is a bad sailor, Bunny, dear—you leave him to-night to recuperate, and to-morrow you won't know him," Rachel observed.

She sat back in her chair and looked at him critically. He had certainly a worn and weary air to-night. He was never handsome, and yet in such a moment as this there was to Rachel something indescribably attractive about him. To all women the sight of a man suffering strikes a note of incongruous pain. Bastian, as a rule, was so strong, so strength-giving. His *metier* was to protect, to support, to comfort, that any suggestion of weakness about him was something so unusual, it was not to be estimated all at once.

The girl-woman who watched him now confessed to herself that never had she imagined it possible for one human creature to care for another as she now cared for him. She was almost alarmed at the vehemence of her love ; it seemed to sweep her off her feet—to plunge her into a whirlwind of new strange thoughts, now and awful feelings. It was really most extraordinary how that first subtle touch of poison—how that suggested lie of Giles Hamilton had been able to take such firm hold in Rachel's heart.

Anne's fierce championship of Bastian had shaken the doubt for a little while, but it was back again now with redoubled force, with re-strengthened conviction. Bastian himself had brought about this most convincing doubt ; those last few words he had spoken had been the most conclusive evidence of all.

" Does he love her any longer ? What is the true story between them ? Is all the blame on his side ? " These were a few of the questions that rushed again and again through her mind. Occasionally there would come a reaction.

" How is it possible that Nell could have lived with me as long as she did, meeting him so frequently, seeming so indifferent to his coming and going, if she had some deep cause of wrong against him ? How or why should Bastian have brought her to my house ; what earthly purpose was to be served by doing so ? Oh ! to know the truth, to have the whole story told out at last, and then to have peace ! "

Yet she refused to have any conversation with him could

Bastian ; she denied him the right that was undoubtedly his or any man's placed in a position like his.

" I don't want him to have to prevaricate to me, to tell me lies," Rachel explained to herself. But this was no defense even to herself of a line of conduct at once strange and unkind.

The truth was our poor little heroine was no longer mistress of her emotions. The wave of a mighty love and an equally mighty jealousy had swept over her, carrying away all her ordinary thoughts and feelings. She shrank from speaking alone with Bastian because she dreaded lest by one word or sign she should let him know the change that had come over her where he was concerned.

" Better a thousand times that he should be angry with me than that he should pity me ! "

Her lovely face flamed with hot colour at the very thought.

Dinner came to an end at last, and, as Rachel had predicted, Mrs. Langridge grew so undignifiedly sleepy that Anne and Bastian hastened to get her back to her hotel.

Rachel went down with them to the hall and saw them off. Her brougham was in waiting and was to come back for her after it had conveyed Anne and her aunt home.

With true feminine contrariness, Rachel waited eagerly, expecting, hoping Bastian would make a further request for a private chat. She half imagined he would propose to stay with her till the carriage came back, and though she had said she could not be alone with him her heart leaped at the mere suggestion of hearing his grave dear voice and looking at his thoughtful and saddened face.

Bastian, however, carefully abstained from making any further demand upon Lady Castletown's time.

As the moment came when he should have taken her hand in farewell, he avoided this. He was busy wrapping up his mother, and he spoke what he had to say quite openly before the others.

" By to-morrow I shall hope to send you news of Miss Foster. You can either communicate with her direct or through me, whichever you prefer. Good night, Rachel, I fancy the brougham will be back in half-an-hour."

Anne was rather dubious as she kissed her sister, and said " good night " also.

" It is surely a little late to go and see Mrs. Hamilton. If she is such an invalid is it not, Rachel ? " she said, questioningly.

She had quite dismissed those words. Rachel had spoken about Giles Hamilton earlier in the day as absolute nonsense, a sort of angry bravado, spoken out of a desire to shock and annoy her. Nevertheless, Anne was too keen not to see that there was always some sort of danger to be associated with Captain Hamilton, and she learnt of Rachel's intimacy with his mother with something like displeasure.

She did not believe for one instant that Rachel could be so foolish as to let this man creep into her life. She would have been better pleased, however, if she had known that her sister had resolutely determined to deny the Hamiltons her friendship.

It was an open secret that trouble and disaster had fallen heavily on the former owners of Corby Court, and Anne, apart from any other reason, was indignantly eager that the Hamilton coffers should not be replenished at Rachel's expense.

Rachel only laughed at her now.

" Oh ! very probably I shan't go at all. I am very tired, too. I believe I will follow Bunny's example and go to bed ! Good night, Anne, we will ride at eleven ; will that suit you ? "

Anne held the slender figure a moment in her arms.

" Good night, Baby Rae ! " she said, softly. " Heaven bless you, little sister, and give you every happiness ! "

Rachel stood staring after Anne's retreating figure as in a dream. At any other moment she would have responded eagerly to Anne's unusual tenderness ; but now she was conscious only of seeing Bastian vanish into the carriage, of hearing the door slam after him, and then of being left alone to fight with her sorrows as best she could !

## CHAPTER XX.

ELEANOR FOSTER had been very ill.

The difficulty of finding her a comfortable and respectable lodging had been as great as Philip Robinson had imagined.

He had been careful to keep this difficulty away from poor Eleanor, for he saw she had as much as she could do to struggle against her physical weakness as well as her trouble.

The question of being without luggage was a serious one. People are apt to look askance at would-be lodgers who arrived with no belongings, and are young, and of the opposite sex. Nearly the whole day was spent by them in seeking unsuccessfully for a temporary home for Eleanor.

Finally, Robinson had to leave her at the railway-station again while he went on his search alone.

Towards evening he came back with the welcome intelligence that he had found two clean rooms in a quiet street out of one of the bigger streets about Westminster.

Eleanor was by this time so ill that she accepted all he had done in a weary, half-dreaming condition. Another time her heart must have responded to his thought and care, for no creature could have done more for her, considering his limitations, than Philip had done.

As soon as the rooms were found he had gone to a large linen-draper's shop, had bought a trunk and had asked one of the women assistants to buy for him such garments as would be of actual necessity.

"My friend is too ill to get things for herself," he explained.

This outlay cost him a considerable sum, and to get the money it had been necessary to drive to his bank, where his modest earnings were always placed. He had also been obliged to send a second message to the office announcing his non-arrival that day, and one to his mother warning her he might be late for dinner.

It was, indeed, nearly nine o'clock before Philip could tear himself away from the small lodgings which were now Eleanor's home.

He had foreseen that she would be in no condition to write to Lady Castletown, or obtain her clothes; thus he had taken the precaution to provide her with necessities. Luck was with him in the matter of the landlady, who was full of sympathy for Eleanor; albeit there had been one moment of doubt and anxiety as to whether the young lady's illness might not turn out to be infectious. A visit from a busy neighbouring doctor, however, had reassured her, and Philip, too, in a sense.

The doctor pronounced Eleanor to be suffering from nothing but excessive weakness. This weakness might develop into a kind of influenza, but there was nothing to cause alarm or anxiety.

"The system has evidently been very much tried," the doctor said. "Has there been any great mental shock?"

Philip said he feared there had been, and there was much mental trouble, and the doctor had shaken his head and gone away in a rush, leaving the young man sitting alone in the twilight of the little-room, his heart like a stone in his breast.

Oh! the joy it would have been to him to have cared for Eleanor as he had cared this day, to have felt her cling to him, turn to him for help had only the story been written differently! Even now there was joy to him in realising she was as close, that she was alone, save for him, that she trusted him and let him be her friend; but the dreams, the hopes, the unvanquished desire that those hopes had brought to him in his dream all died away in this moment.

It was no longer the Eleanor he had loved; it was another Eleanor, infinitely sweater and sadder, but set apart from him by a secret that he knew was one of the most terrible the heart of a woman could hold.

Day after day he came back to those humble lodgings.

He deceived his mother, his comrades, his friends; he had to invent excuses for his perpetual absence from the office. It used to hurt him like a blow when he met John Foster's reproachful eye. He felt that Eleanor's father was beginning

to doubt him, to imagine every sort of dissipation; but he bore with everything for Eleanor's sake.

For several days he did not see her. The sympathetic landlady, scenting a romance (but objecting to nothing since she was well paid), would have poured out stories of Philip's goodness and anxiety in Eleanor's ear, but Eleanor was in no condition for confidence. She lay all the time in a sort of coma. The doctor was puzzled a little, but he set everything down to excessive weakness.

He ordered all sorts of nourishment, and came every day, and so it was a week had crawled away and things had remained as they were till one evening, when Philip arrived with the news of Bastian Lithgow's return.

It was the first day Eleanor had been able to leave her bed, a prematurely hot spring day that was exhausting to all, and to none more than to her.

She looked like a writh of herself as she sat in the shabby sitting-room and Philip came in.

The hearts of both were too full to speak. Now she was a little better Eleanor could grasp to a certain extent the goodness of this man, who loved her, and whom she had so cruelly despised.

She gave him her hand, and tears sprang to her eyes; she would have tried to utter some thanks, but Philip stopped her.

They sat a long time without speaking, then she began to question in whispers, and she gave a little cry of joy when she heard of Bastian's unexpected return.

"Ah! bring him to me—let me see him, Philip! I must see him! I must see him!" she cried breathlessly.

The man's dark face flushed hotly for one instant, then it grew ashen white, and he himself turned cold as he heard that eager cry.

"Is—is—this man—then, so much to you, Nell!" he said huskily, and the note of a fierce jealousy broke out in his voice, reaching Eleanor instantly.

She understood him, and a little nervous fear crept up within her.

"What would happen if Philip should know the truth," was what this fear really signified to her.

She put out her hand and touched him.

"Bastian Lithgow is this to me, Philip," she whispered; "he is the one person who can stand between Rachel and terrible suffering. I—I cannot tell you more. You have been so good, you will trust me—will you not? Let me see Mr. Lithgow—let me tell him—"

She had not strength to say more.

Philip carried her hand to his lips.

The effort to be calm and brotherly with her was hourly becoming a torture to him.

He loved her so much—and she—he could not now, he told himself, cherish even one hope that she would ever grow to care for him in return.

Wherein he was utterly wrong, for never had poor Eleanor been so near to loving him as she was now, when at every moment he demonstrated to her some new trait of loving goodness.

Philip Robinson would have been astonished could Eleanor's heart have been revealed to him, and the knowledge of the comfort it would have been to her to have accepted the love he gave her made clear to him. He little knew how much of her sorrow and pain at this time was for himself, for the awful shock she would have to give him were she to tell him the story of her life.

All this was hidden from the man, but there was such truth conveyed to him in those few broken words she spoke about Bastian that the fire of his jealousy and doubt died away.

After all, on reflection, it would have been quite impossible for Robinson to have really doubted his employer, he had known Bastian too well and too long for that.

"I will carry Mr. Lithgow your message, Nell," he said, "and I pray, dear, that through his good offices some, at least, of the trouble you have now may be lifted from. You prefer to wait now till you have seen Mr. Lithgow before communicating with Lady Castletown!"

Eleanor bent her head.

"Yes," she said, in a low voice, "I will be guided in all things by Mr. Lithgow, especially as—"

Philip Robinson knew what that unfinished sentence meant. Especially as Rachel had evidently made no effort to trace out and find her girl companion.

There was an expression on his face that seemed to tell Eleanor his thoughts were not gentle towards Lady Castletown just then.

She hastened to defend her friend.

"You must think nothing hard about Rachel; you cannot imagine how good she has been to me—how sweet, how loving—she—she has had full provocation to act as she is doing, and after all she is following my wishes, I pray her not to let my father know anything. But for this, Lady Castletown would have been making every inquiry about me at your office, Philip. It is I who must write to her, and this I will do as soon as I have seen Mr. Lithgow."

Anne, if she could have yielded to her own wishes, would have liked to return immediately to Silchester.

Now that Bastian had come home, now that she had seen Rachel, she had nothing to keep her in London; but Mrs. Langridge was enjoying her short visit so much that Anne could not bring herself to disturb the old lady's pleasure.

The days went by in quick, eventful fashion—eventful—that is to say, to Bastian's mother, who found an excitement and a pleasure in the smallest and most ordinary things.

Rachel was a good deal with her sister and her aunt, yet there were no more confidences between Anne and her, and she had, of course, many engagements of her own which necessitated her leaving them frequently.

Bastian was seemingly invisible. For the first three or four days after Mrs. Langridge's arrival, Rachel saw nothing of him, although she knew he spent all his spare time with his mother.

Rachel was waiting for Bastian to write and give her the promised news of Eleanor, and when four days had gone by, and she had heard nothing, her anger and misery and impatience could be restrained no longer.

She was riding with Anne in the Park when some uncontrollable influence urged her to speak.

"Bastian is really too sleepy and stupid!" she exclaimed, *dpropos* of nothing.

Rachel had been strangely silent until this moment, and Anne looked round startled.

"Imagine, he has been home four days, and he has done nothing about Nell," she added.

"How do you know he has done nothing?" Anne queried, a little curiously.

"Well, if he has done something he has not let me know anything about it."

Anne laughed.

"Possibly Bastian thinks as you let so long a time elapse without attempting to find Miss Foster, that you are in no hurry to know anything about her!" she said, coldly.

Rachel was silent, and at that moment her face flushed slightly, and she bent her head in answer to the salutation of a man who rode past them.

It was Giles Hamilton. There was a flash as of triumph from his eyes as he met Lady Castletown, but he made no effort to join her. Anne felt, and felt it gladly, that she was doubtless the reason of this. She had not noticed his expression or Rachel's quick change of colour at he came.

"Captain Hamilton has certainly not the air of a ruined man!" she remarked, drily enough; "he is always well mounted and is as smart as ever, I see!"

Rachel bent to pat the neck of her mare.

"Ruin in a social sense is only a question of comparison, Anne," she said. "Captain Hamilton, as you say, looks as smart as ever; yet, Corby is to be sold! A whole history is contained in those words."

Anne reined in her mount rather sharply as they passed a large cavalcade of riders.

"I am sorry for Mrs. Hamilton," she said, in a constrained sort of way when she rejoined Rachel, she had still that same feeling that the Hamiltons



"ON, BASTIAN, CAN YOU SAVE ME?" SAID RACHEL, CLINGING TO HIM ALMOST IN A FRENZY.

were a possible danger, but the danger being a remote one she allowed herself to speak of it.

Rachel laughed.

"And I," she said in a manner that was full of strange defiance, "I am very sorry for Giles!"

They relapsed into silence after this, and when they had reached Hyde Park Corner Rachel dismissed her groom to accompany Anne to her hotel, and rode alone through the streets to Eaton-square.

She had a curious hard look on her pretty young face as she did so; had anyone been able to analyse the expression they would have found a very strong measure of fear in the look. Once or twice Rachel glanced round as though she half expected someone to have followed her, and a sigh of relief escaped her as she found this was not the case.

As she rode up to her door, where a second groom was waiting to take her horse, she was met by the intelligence that Mr. Lithgow was in her boudoir waiting to see her.

Rachel turned deathly white as she slipped from the saddle.

She walked in through the open door in a halting way that seemed full of weariness, and passed up the stairs slowly.

The butler had gone out of the hall; she was alone; everything was familiar to her, and yet everything was changed in this moment.

What awful thing had happened to all and everything, but especially to herself, since she had left her house this morning?

She had gone out very early; was it merely the fatigue of going out so early that was falling upon her now?

She clutched the wide oaken banisters with her little hand.

"Oh, Heaven!" she said to herself suddenly, "what have I done!—what have I done!"

Someone opened her boudoir and came out into the passage.

"Is that you, Rachel?" Bastian asked, gently. He had schooled himself to speak to her, to meet

exactly as he had always done. His voice now was, even and in its old tone; but as he looked down the stairs and saw her standing there white and as it were half-fainting, he lost all the constraint he had taught himself, he ran down to her and took her in his arms for one instant.

"You are ill!" he said, huskily. "Rachel, why will you ride so much? You have been out for hours they tell me. Can you walk upstairs? No. Let me carry you as I used to carry Baby Rae in the old days!"

She turned her magnificent eyes up to him. There was a world of unspeakable suffering in their depths.

"Yes; carry me," she said, faintly. "I—I am too tired to walk."

He lifted her in his strong arms quite easily. She had slipped her hat from her head, and as she lay in his arms she pressed her face down on his breast biting her lips to stifle the cry that was hovering over them, and to keep the tears from rushing to her eyes.

It was a moment of Heaven to them both that short sojourn up the few remaining stairs.

Bastian's strong limbs trembled, but not with fatigue. He could have walked miles and miles with such a burden lying on his heart; but for all his will and stout determination to meet Rachel in the guise of her old and trusty friend such an experience as this was so new, so exquisite in its moment of dream-like beauty that he could not quite control himself.

He was, moreover, genuinely alarmed about her. She looked so ill, so white.

"You are better, dear?" he asked her as quietly as he could when they reached the boudoir.

He would have put her on to the sofa or into a chair; but Rachel stood beside him clinging to him like a child.

"Bastian," she said, in a strange husky voice, breaking the silence after a little pause, and averting her face from him, "Bastian, I want you to tell me something!"

He answered her calmly enough, but his heart was in flames.

"Yes, dear, what is it?"

"Bastian," very low, "do, do you love me?" He stood quite silent an instant.

"Better than my life—better than my soul!" he said, the truth breaking from him unconsciously.

She gave a curious little cry.

"Better than anyone in the world! Say it, Bastian; and yet, don't say it, it would kill me now. Bastian, Bastian, I—I am such a fool. I—oh! will you forgive me? I thought it was you, you and Nell, you understand! No, no, don't move away from me, not just for a moment. I have lost you, I know; but don't go for a moment. Bastian, say you forgive me!"

"Child, I love you!" Bastian said, the passion of that love breaking into music in his voice; "cling to me, Rachel, and listen. I love you better than anyone in the world. I have loved you from the first, I shall love you till I die. Rachel, my heart, my treasure!"

She was clinging to him now almost in a frenzy.

"Oh, Bastian, can you save me? You don't know what I have done! I have been mad—mad! I—I don't know how I have lived through these days; the horrible thought about you and Nell first came to—"

He stopped her.

"I am here from Eleanor Foster," he said. "I have all her story to give you, poor, wronged girl; and you thought it was I who—"

Rachel reached up and stopped his lips with her hand.

"No—no—don't say it; it sounds so awful; and there is more to tell, more—that is awful, Bastian—Bastian, I can never be your love now. I—oh! love, forgive—forgive! I was married this morning to Giles Hamilton!"

(To be continued.)

AN elephant's skin, when tanned, is over an inch thick.



VERA SAT IN HER CHAIR, HELPLESSLY, POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING.

## THE GREYSTOKE MYSTERY.

—10—

## CHAPTER XXV.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.

DURING the rest of the day Mrs. Lewis took care not to leave Vera's side for ten minutes. Evidently Dudley had impressed upon her the necessity of caution, and she was determined to obey him.

Her conduct rendered the young girl nervous and uneasy, but she had no serious misgivings as to the success of the attempt she purposed making, neither did it once occur to her to doubt the honesty of Madame's intentions. Indeed, she felt sure that Adela would not fail her, inasmuch as she had so much at stake as Vera herself.

The day merged into twilight, and that into darkness. At a little past ten she said, good-night, and went to her room, and directly afterwards she heard the maid locking the different doors, and evidently withdrawing the keys from the locks. After all, Adela's precaution of bringing the rope had been a wise one—but for it Vera would have found it impossible to leave the house.

She made one end of it fast round the bedstead and then sat at the window waiting for the promised signal. It was very dark, a light fine rain was falling, and neither moon nor star were visible. Vera tested the rope; it seemed firm and strong enough to bear her weight; then she resumed her seat and waited.

Presently she heard a low whistle, and in reply she gently threw down the stone as had been agreed between them. Her preparations were already complete, she had nothing to do but to lower the rope to the ground, and then follow it herself.

Just as she was on the point of getting out of the window the handle of her door was turned from the other side. The voice of the blind woman said,—

"Vera, Vera, are you there?"

For a moment Vera thought her chance was gone. She dared not slip down the rope, and make the best of her way out of the garden, for it was certain that the moment Mrs. Lewis knew of her departure she and her maid would follow. She hesitated before answering, and the old lady repeated her question more insistently than before.

"Yes, I am here. What do you want?" she asked, simulating a sleepy tone.

"I was anxious about you—that is all. Shall you mind if I come in and sleep with you? I am nervous to-night. I cannot rest by myself. I keep on fancying someone is in the room with me."

Vera did not know whether this was true or not, but in either case she was in a dilemma as to what reply she should make. If she refused, suspicion might be aroused. If she assented—then good-bye to her prospect of escape.

She took off her hat and cape, and slipped a dressing-gown over her attire before she opened the door then she said, as cheerfully as she could,—

"I am afraid my bed is too small to hold both of us, but if you like I will lie down on the couch."

Her quiet, matter-of-fact tone did a good deal towards calming the old lady, who took hold of her arm, and came into the room, round which she seemed to peer with her sightless eyes. Suppose she went to the window, and found the rope!

"I am restless," she said, with a sigh. "I wish Dudley was in the house. His presence was a protection."

"He will be here to-morrow."

"How do you know that?" sharply.

"I don't know—I only suppose it likely. If you cannot sleep, let me come and read to you for awhile, and then I daresay you will soon done off."

The old lady hesitated. Her fears in reality were all on Vera's account, and the latter's col-

lected manner went far towards dissipating them. All the rooms and the front and back doors downstairs were locked, and the keys in her pocket—how then was it possible the girl could leave the house?

"No, I won't be so selfish as to deprive you of a night's rest. I will go back to my room, but we will leave our doors open, so that if I call out you will come to me at once. Shall you mind that?"

Vera had to say no, and then the blind woman slowly retreated to her own room, which was on the opposite side of the narrow passage. It seemed to Vera hours before she heard her get into bed, and now she would have to wait until she fell asleep before she could do anything, for every sound in one room was audible in the other.

Would Madame wait, or would she grow impatient, and leave, thinking something had happened to make the execution of her plan impossible for that night?

Vera had to risk this—she could not communicate to her what had hindered her appearance.

At last—oh, happy sound!—Mrs. Lewis's regular breathing told her she was asleep. Now was her time.

She got on the window sill very gently, and slid down the rope. The distance was not great, and the young girl's lightness and agility rendered the task a fairly easy one. She went to the garden door apprehensively enough. It was locked.

"Madame," she whispered, through the key-hole.

"I am here," was the low reply.

"How shall I get out? The door is fastened, and the key taken out."

"I have brought two or three skeleton keys with me. Look out, and I'll throw them over—one is sure to fit."

The keys were all encased in cotton wool, so they made no noise in falling, and as luck would

have it Vera was able to open the lock with the very first one she tried.

A few seconds later she was standing on the other side, explaining to Mrs. Graham the reason of her delay.

Madame waited impatiently, and interrupted her before she had finished.

"Come along—we have no time to spare. It is after midnight already."

By her help Vera mounted the mule, while she took the bridle to lead him along the narrow sheep track—for they were crossing the hills and the path was both difficult and dangerous in the darkness.

The mule, however, was surefooted, and both he and his leader seemed to know the way well enough, for they kept steadily on without a pause.

Madame was very taciturn; she did not make one single remark, and when Vera ventured to speak the returned her monosyllabic answers.

Every now and then she would glance round apprehensively, as if to make sure they were not being followed; after that she trudged steadily on without showing the least symptom of fatigue.

It took them some time to reach their destination.

To Vera this lonely journey across the mountain darkness seemed interminable. She grew a little nervous, and asked Madame if they had much farther to go.

"Not much," was the brief reply.

Vera's life since she left school had been so full of movement and surprise, that she had by this time got accustomed both to the unexpected and to the idea that her path might be beset by perils which it behoved her to guard herself against.

Once or twice, sundry doubts of Madame flashed across her; but she dismissed them. And indeed it was too late to draw back now. The danger she left behind was certain; the one she went to meet problematical.

At last there loomed before her in the darkness rather a big pile of buildings, whose form the obscurity did not permit her to make out.

In front of these Madame helped her to dismount, and then turned the mule loose.

"Come along," she said, and she led the way through some big iron gates, which she unlocked, into a square or quadrangle, round which the castle was built.

Crossing this, she let herself in through a small door, on the opposite side to the gates, which she looked behind her.

Vera finally found herself in a small bare-looking apartment, to gain which she descended some stone steps.

It contained a table, a couple of chairs, and a square of carpet in the middle of the stone floor.

"Sit down," said Madame, indicating an oak arm chair which looked as if it was a survival of the Middle Ages.

Vera was glad to obey; she was a good deal fatigued by the journey, and the rest was welcome.

As Madame closed the door, it echoed with a sort of metallic clang through the silent passages.

"How dismal it sounds," the young girl murmured.

Madame smiled grimly.

"Yes. Echoes are like ghosts—they take immediate possession of empty houses."

The idea was not a cheerful one, and as the elder woman spoke, she stood opposite her stepdaughter, whom she contemplated for a few seconds with her curiously glittering eyes.

"Why do you look at me like that?"

"I was only wondering what there was in you that made men love you," Adela answered, slowly. "I suppose it is your air of youth, and your brilliant complexion. Your eyes are not finer than my own, and when the fashion for your tawny coloured hair is over, people will call it red, and say it is ugly. Suppose you had an attack of small-pox and your skin was left marred and pitted by it—how should you like that?"

"Not at all," Vera replied, candidly.

"You are proud of your beauty, then?"

"I don't know that I am proud of it; still I

am certainly glad I am not unpleasant to look upon."

"But in time you will grow old and ugly."

"It does not follow; some old women have beautiful faces."

Madame shrugged her shoulders.

Her manner puzzled Vera, who wondered she did not suggest their both taking the rest that she, at least, sorely needed.

Such an idea did not seem to enter Mrs. Graham's mind. Suddenly she crossed the room, passed at the back of Vera, and the next minute a strong cord was thrown round the girl's arms and waist, the slip knot tightened, and finally secured to the chair in which she was sitting, in such a manner as to make movement on her part impossible.

Amazement and indignation held Vera speechless; moreover, she was terrified. She saw in a moment that Madame had betrayed her—the woman's treachery was patent on her features as she stood opposite, having resumed her former place with her back to the door. The oak table was between her and Vera; overhead swung an oil lamp, whose light revealed every cruel line in her haggard face.

"Have you ever heard of escaping Scylla to fall into Charybdis?" she asked mockingly, then she laughed. "Shall I tell you the truth—that you have fled from the man who loves you to the woman who hates you!"

Vera tried hard to master her consternation and pride helped her. Adela Graham should not see that she was frightened.

"I do not know why you should hate me—I have done you no harm."

"Done me no harm!" Madame's eyes gleamed fiercely. "Done me no harm, when you have taken from me the man I love, and with him my last chance of happiness! Why could you not stay away from us—what brought you to the Grange at all? You had youth and beauty, and a clear conscience. Great Heaven! what would I not have given for such gifts as these!—while I had nothing—nothing but the hope of Dudley Maddox's love. And you came and took it from me. What worse wrong could you inflict on me!"

"The wrong was not intentional. When I came home I knew nothing of Dudley Maddox's existence, and I am certainly innocent of any effort to attract his attention."

"That makes it no better—it does not alter the fact that he threw me over like an old glove, for your sake."

She winced as she said this—what confession can be more horribly galling to a woman! Even Vera was conscious of a sort of pity for her in her loneliness and misery.

"He thought he admired me, but most likely his love was only the fancy for a new face," she said, in a voice that was not quite steady.

Strangely enough Madame seemed to catch eagerly at the suggestion.

"It may be so. I hope it is. It is your beauty that holds him—nothing else. If you were to lose that he might come back to me."

There was a sinister significance in her tone—what did it mean?

"And as you know," continued Vera, eagerly pursuing her supposed advantage, "My greatest desire is never to look upon his face again; the fact that I am here at the present moment ought to be sufficient guarantee of that. All I ask is to get away from him—to be out of his reach. I am willing to leave England if you wish—to go abroad even. There is no tie now to keep me here."

"If you were to go abroad he would follow you—yes, to the uttermost ends of the earth. I know him so well. Difficulties only increase his ardour to overcome them. So long as you are alive and keep your beauty so long will he love you. Perhaps, as you say, it is not love—I have said so to myself many times. It is a spell you have thrown over him, and when he is free from it he will come back to me—yes, he will come back to me."

She repeated the last words almost dreamily, clasping her hands meanwhile, and looking past Vera to the shadows beyond. Her worst enemy might have pitied her as he saw the anguish in

her eyes. She was a gambler who had staked her all on one throw—Dudley Maddox's love. It was her sole hope—her sole chance of salvation.

Vera tried to move in her chair, but the cords were so tight that the mere effort hurt her.

"Why have you fastened me like this?" she demanded, her cheeks flushing red with shame at the indignity.

"Because I do not wish you to leave this room."

"But I can call out for help if necessary."

"It would avail you nothing. As I have already told you there is no one in this place except one old woman, who sleeps above the gateway, and who is suffering from rheumatism so badly that she cannot get out of bed. The house you have just come from—Glen Raven—is lonely, but not half so lonely as this. Call out for help if you like. I give you free leave to do so."

Once more Madame smiled—a scoffing, contemptuous smile that stung Vera into passionate anger. She had much ado to control it.

"What do you intend doing with me?" she asked, after a slight pause; "am I to be kept a prisoner here?"

There was no reply. Madame still smiled. Vera set her teeth hard.

"Are you going to kill me?" she added, below her breath.

"And if I did kill you should I be much to blame! Have not hundreds of murders been committed for less provocation than you have given me? It would but be taking a fair revenge. Life is only good for the happiness it brings; but if you take away from it all chances of happiness then it is no longer worth having. You have taken from me the best part of my existence—we should be quits if I took from you existence itself."

Vera had not been happy of late; more than that, she had been intensely miserable, and once or twice had even thought of death as a peaceful end to her trouble. But when she thus stood as it seemed within measurable distance of it, when the cold breath of the grey phantom fell with icy chill upon her, all the fresh and vivid young life in her veins rose up in sudden rebellion.

She was so young to die, not yet twenty, and with all the possibilities of the coming years before her. And a violent death too—oh, it was too, too terrible!

Her fortitude gave way; she grew ashily white, even to the lips, her eyes were wide and wild.

"You cannot mean what you say; you would not be so heartless, so cruel!" she moaned out in her pain and despair.

"You have been cruel to me."

"No, no, you are wrong. I have never been cruel to anyone or anything in all my life. I would have loved you if you would have let me, just as I would have loved my father. Yes, indeed it is true. When I came home to the Grange I was longing for love; my heart hungered for it."

"And did not your father satisfy that hunger?" Madame asked, with curling lip.

"He did not. There was always something strange about him, something that repulsed me in spite of myself. He had altered terribly; he was no longer the father of my childhood, whom I had loved and been so proud of. Think of what he was when you first married him."

"You should not have said that, for it makes me remember how, even then, you were my rival. He loved you best—you, a mere child at school. Your happiness was his first consideration always. So you see I have good cause to hate you. From the very beginning our interests have clashed."

"It has been involuntary on my part."

"That makes no difference to the fact. Perhaps it is Fate, but whatever it is, it is undeniable. The world seems to be too small to contain you and me."

The girl was silent. She had exhausted her arguments. To all she urged Madame had a reply.

She felt weak and ill. The strain was telling on her, every movement was painful, her limbs were growing cramped. Moreover, she saw how cleverly Adela had laid her plans.

If she disappeared it was not at all likely that any notice would be taken of the fact; there was no one who would make inquiries on her behalf, except indeed Dudley, and no idea of foul play would enter his head in connection with her; he would think she was hiding herself from him merely.

Her head fell back against the oak of the chair, her eyes closed, she felt sick and dizzy.

"Don't faint," said Madame, tranchantly. "I have neither water nor brandy with which to revive you, and I have not finished all I want to say to you. I will set your mind at rest on one point. I am not going to kill you."

Her words acted as a restorative. Vera raised her head eagerly.

"What are you going to do, then?" and Madame came a few steps forward and leaned over the table to give her reply.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MADAME'S VENGEANCE.

"I AM NOT GOING TO ROB YOU OF YOUR LIFE, BUT ONLY OF YOUR BEAUTY," Mrs. Graham said, very deliberately, "just as we draw the fangs of a poisonous snake. Your face has been the means of bringing evil and misfortune wherever it has been seen, and it shall do so no longer. In future men will not turn to gaze at you with admiration; they will turn away their eyes in repugnance, perhaps pity."

Vera was not vain; like the ordinary run of girls of her age, not so vain, perhaps; but she knew she was beautiful, and she had been glad to know it.

Madame's words made her blood run cold; she could not speak, she could hardly think. She sat upright in her chair, unmindful of the cords that bound her, and stared at the woman opposite with a sort of dumb fascination. Adela Graham returned the gaze unmoved.

She had wrought herself to a pitch of frenzied resolution that bordered on madness—indeed, to all intents and purposes she was mad on this particular point—mad with jealousy, as so many unhappy creatures have been before—ay, and will be again.

"Have I ever told you that my mother was a half-caste?" she went on; "from her, I inherit a strain of Hindoo blood, and she it was who taught me the use of poisons and their properties."

"It is a dangerous knowledge, perhaps, but I have found it useful on many occasions. Amongst other things she gave me this," showing a small bottle of colourless fluid that she took from a case, "it looks innocent enough, doesn't it? And yet it is an essence more deadly than any European chemist has ever heard of."

"One drop on the skin raises a blister, and when that subsides a deep red scar remains that the years have no power to touch. Do you understand now?"

Yes, Vera understood, and a low cry broke from her lips.

"Oh, you cannot—cannot mean it! No woman with a heart in her bosom could be so fiendish—so devilish!"

"I have no heart—it died weeks ago, and its place is a burning fire that consumes me night and day," the woman rejoined fiercely. "Shall I tell you what happened directly after I left the Grange? Dudley Maddox did his best to murder me—he pushed me off the deck of a ship into the black river below, and even at this moment he thinks I perished in its depths. And it was done in order to clear his path for you! Was that likely to soften my heart, or fill it with affection for the rival who had taken my place? You are right in saying my conduct is devilish! It seems to me that that night, when, more dead than alive, I crawled on the deck of a barge to which I had clung for dear life, not one, but seven devils had entered my heart, and they have tormented me ever since. Even you, at this moment, are less miserable than I am."

And looking at her feverish face, her glittering eyes, and haggard face, the girl was almost tempted to believe it.

By this time she had somewhat recovered from her first shock; she was casting about in her mind in frantic desperation for some means of at least gaining time.

A swift review of the situation had told her that to cry out now and attempt to attract attention meant mere waste of breath; its only effect would be to hasten the catastrophe she dreaded, as there would be no one near likely to come to her aid.

But early in the morning the shepherds might be passing the castle on their way to tend the sheep, and if she could only make them hear it was possible they might force an entrance.

It must now, she calculated, be somewhere about two o'clock. In another hour or two it would be light.

Every minute that passed was a gain to her. She moistened her dry lips before she spoke.

"If you are miserable now," she said eagerly, "you will be a hundredfold more miserable when you have committed the crime you contemplate. Think what it means to send a fellow creature out into the world maimed and disfigured! It is the very refinement of cruelty."

"No more cruel than pushing a fellow creature into the river and leaving her to perish!"

"But I did not do that."

"No; still, you were the cause of its being done. Before he saw you Dudley loved me—if it had not been for you, he would love me still."

"And is such love as his worth having—a would-be murderer's?"

Madame made a quick gesture of impatience.

"Perhaps not—perhaps no man's love is worth having. It is a mystery that I cannot fathom—this passion that possesses me. Sometimes I believe I hate him, instead of loving him; but all the same no other woman shall be to him what I have been."

"Don't you understand—have I not told you that my greatest desire is never to see him again?"

"You have! but what does such an assertion amount to? As I said before, difficulties don't daunt him, and so long as your beauty inflamed his senses so long would his passion pursue you. When he sees you changed and disfigured he will turn from you with disgust; but not till then."

Madame reached out her hand towards the bottle, which she had placed on the table. The movement made Vera shudder afresh.

She looked eagerly at the small window with its iron gratings to see if any streak of daylight were making its way through; but the shutters were so closely fastened that it was likely enough they would shut out the dawn even if it had already broken.

In the silence she could even hear her own heart beat. What could she do or say to avert this terrible fate threatening her?

"Stay!" she cried, with sudden resolve. "Have you thought of the consequences of such an act as you contemplate? Don't you think that I shall be tracked here, and when I tell my tale all England will join in the cry of indignation against you, and you will be sentenced to a life-long punishment?"

Adela shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

"I shan't mind that, if it happens. But it is not likely to happen. As soon as it is light I shall leave this place, and he will indeed be a clever man who tracks me! But I am not fond of the sight of pain. I shall not use this essence while you are conscious. I am going to give you chloroform first."

She went to a small shelf in a corner of the room, from which she took a second bottle, and a sort of leather mask, modelled like the lower part of the face, which was apparently intended to place over the mouth and nose during the inhalation of the anaesthetic. Vera watched her in silence, and braced herself for an almost superhuman effort to burst the cords that bound her.

If she were only free she could meet Madame on fair terms—nay, she would have the advantage of youth and strength and a finer physique than the elder woman.

But her attempts were useless, their only effect was to exhaust her. Madame had tied her knots

much too securely for them to give way, and the cords themselves were thick and strong in addition.

Never until that moment had Vera known what it was to be utterly desperate. She called aloud for aid; she shrieked until the room echoed and her voice cracked. With her prayers for help she mingled threats to her captor of future consequences. All was in vain. No help came, and Madame only smiled at her impotent efforts.

It is a wonder the girl did not go mad under the fearful strain; many brains have given way with less provocation. If it had been death that threatened her Vera fancied she would have met it more bravely, but that her beauty should be sacrificed—that she should go through her future life maimed and repulsive, a sort of leper from whom her fellow creatures would shrink!

Madame's movements were exceedingly slow and methodical. She seemed quite sure of herself, and the precautions she had taken against discovery.

There was no need for haste. Perhaps she glistened over the suffering she was inflicting on the wretched girl whose misfortune it was to have incurred her enmity, or perhaps she did not wish to run any risk of failure by precipitation. She still wore her gipsy garments, but she had pushed the tattered sleeves back so as to leave her arms free and thrown off the orange neckerchief which had formerly been tied round her throat. Her hair hung in elf locks about her face, her eyes seemed larger and blacker on account of her extreme thinness, but they were full of savage resolution.

Yes, undoubtedly she was mad. Constant brooding over her love, her hatred, and her wrongs had altered the delicate balance which separates sanity from insanity, and she was no longer absolutely responsible for her actions.

At length her preparations were complete, and she turned round. In one hand she held the bottle of chloroform, in the other the mask she intended placing over the young girl's mouth. Vera was silent now, she had resigned herself to her fate. There was nothing to be done save submit.

Her head had fallen back against the rail of the chair; she was very white, her delicate clear-cut features looked as if they had been chiselled out of marble, her large eyes were dilated until they seemed all pupil.

And yet even now her extreme loveliness was as striking as it had ever been—it wrung a groan from her captor's lips in spite of herself.

She slowly approached Vera until she was within about a couple of feet from her chair. Then she paused suddenly, and her face changed—a sort of bluish-grey shadow overspread it; she swerved and caught hold of the table to prevent herself from falling.

"Great Heavens, what has come over me!" she muttered below her breath.

A few seconds later, and she fell forward full length and face downwards, the bottle of chloroform breaking into a dozen fragments, while its contents soaked into her dress.

Her extreme excitement had proved too much for her—she had fainted.

Vera sat in her chair helplessly, and looked on powerless to do anything. Her first impulse was one of deep thankfulness for the respite; all the same, she knew it might only prove to be temporary.

Madame, as she was aware, was subject to these attacks of syncope, which she used to say came from a weak heart, but they were rarely of long duration.

In the course of half-an-hour or so she would be all right again.

But the minutes dragged themselves into half-an-hour, and yet the prone figure still lay there motionless.

The small cell-like room was full of the fumes of the chloroform—a sickly odour that Vera could not at first understand.

Then she recognised it, and as she did so it flashed across her that doubtless the drug had had a stupefying effect on the helpless woman on the floor, and that was why she was still sense-

less; in all probability she would remain so for some time.

Just as she came to this conclusion the girl herself was conscious of a pleasant sort of drowsiness stealing over her.

She did her best to shake it off, she tried by means of recalling her own peril to keep her brain alert, but it was no good.

In spite of all her efforts the powerful drug had its effect, she felt her eyes closing, her head drooped forward on her breast. In a few minutes she, too, was beyond all remembrance of pain or pleasure.

The day broke greyly over the tops of the hills, the shadows fled, the mists rose slowly as the sun kissed them and finally took flight; the birds began to sing, and the sheep to look out for their breakfast.

Then the farm-labourers came out to their work whistling contentedly as they saw the weather had changed and the rain blown away. After all, it looked as if they were going to have a fine harvest.

The shepherd as he passed Trissant Castle wondered how it was he had not caught a glimpse of the caretaker for so long, and whether she had grown tired of the place and gone for a holiday. It must be very lonely there, he speculated, it was a queer place for an English merchant to spend his money upon; perhaps he had never seen it, and would regret his purchase when he did see it.

But these Bristol merchants were so rich—they could afford to play ducks and drakes with their thousands.

He stood for a few minutes in front of the gateway, looking through to the quadrangle within.

It was still in shadow, for the sun had not risen high enough to peep over the walls, and the cups of the little velvet-faced nasturtiums that filled the scrap of border all round the square were still full of dew.

Not a sound was to be heard—not a sign of life to be seen.

The shepherd whistled his dogs, and went his way across the hills, unconscious that within a stone's throw of where he had stood were two women both in peril of their lives.

#### CHAPTER XXVII.

"MABEL."

MAURICE ST. JOHN could not get rid of his misgivings on Vera's account. He knew quite well that so far as their love went they were separated for ever; but the girl was innocent and friendless, and surely he would be justified in making inquiries as to her whereabouts, and finding out that she had fallen into good hands.

He gave Wickham instructions to do his best to trace her, though he was aware the task would be a difficult one, since she seemed to have done her best to sink her identity.

Of course he guessed that she had been accompanied by Dudley Maddox, to whom, on the only occasion of their meeting, he had taken a profound dislike.

He confessed to himself the dislike was probably an unreasonable one, having its foundations in a vague jealousy; but it influenced him all the same.

He thought it likely enough the young man was in love with Vera, and such a state of affairs might bring about complications.

At any rate it behoved him to assure himself that she was with friends.

At first Wickham's inquiries were not crowned with success. He traced the two young people as far as Birmingham; but there he lost the clue; no one could remember having seen them, though they undoubtedly changed trains there.

Maurice was sitting one afternoon, moodily enough, in the library of the Court, when a card was brought to him, on which was inscribed the name,—

"Miss Mabel Butler."

"The young lady is in the drawing-room,

sir," added the footman who had brought in the card.

Maurice went to her in some amazement; he found himself confronted by a small, golden-haired, blue-eyed creature, who blushed divinely as she saw him, and then held out her hand with the prettiest air of friendliness it is possible to imagine.

"You are Mr. St. John! I have heard of you from my friend, Vera Graham. We used to be at school together. I daresay she has mentioned me to you!"

As a matter of fact she had done so, but somehow Maurice had not remembered her name. Mabel dragged forward her father—a stout, short, rosy-faced man, who had been contemplating the water colours on the wall with the air of a connoisseur who knows good pictures when he sees them.

After the introduction Mabel proceeded to state the object of her visit.

"I read in the papers about the fire at Grey-stoke Grange, and I wondered what had become of poor Vera, so I begged papa to bring me here, and let me take her home for a long visit. And now no one seems to know where she is! I made inquiries in every likely and unlikely place, but the only satisfaction I got out of them was from one man who said you would be able to tell me more than anyone else, so I determined to appeal to you."

"I am afraid I am hardly in a position to help you," the young man responded. "I am myself anxious on Miss Graham's account. I suppose you are aware of the events that led up to her flight?"

Mabel nodded assentingly, while her father looked uncomfortable. The old gentleman had been of opinion that the less he had to do with such very queer people as the Grahams the better; but Mabel had staunchly declared that nothing in the world should induce her to give up her friend, and, of course, in the end she had carried her point.

She was no longer a schoolgirl, but a full-fledged "young lady." She had bidden a final farewell to Miss Nicholson, turned up her hair, and lengthened her skirts. Moreover, she was inclined to use to the full her woman's privilege of having her own way—and this her devoted father was in process of finding out.

Maurice told her of Wickham's inquiries, and added that the detective was now pursuing them, and he expected every hour to hear from him as to their result.

"When I do hear, I will certainly let you know," he added, smiling into the pretty girlish face so eagerly raised to his. "I am more pleased than I can say to have had the opportunity of seeing you, Miss Butler, and know that Vera has such a devoted friend. She needs one, I am afraid, poor girl!"

"I should be mean if I deserted her, now!" exclaimed Mabel, indignantly. "I am no believer in fair weather friendship. I am sure she would be true to me through thick and thin, and I'll be the same to her! You don't know how good and kind she always was to me, Mr. St. John. Why she sat up four nights with me when I was ill with scarlet fever, and pulled me through ever so many scrapes besides. And she never had a fair chance at school either. She was kept there all through the holidays; no one ever came to see her, and it was only once in a blue moon she had a letter from her home. And a nice home it was, too!"

Maurice had rung the bell for tea, and now it was brought in and handed round. After Mabel had put her cup down he asked if she and her father would care to see the gardens and grounds of the Court—a proposal to which she immediately consented.

"We are putting up at an hotel at R——," she said to him, confidentially, when they were walking side by side along the smoothly gravelled path—Mr. Butler trotting contentedly behind, "and I intend remaining there until I find out where Vera is. Of course papa will grumble—he always does at everything, but it is only habit, and when you are used to it it really does not matter. I am quite sure if he could only see

Vera he would fall in love with her at once—no man could help it, now could he, Mr. St. John?"

Maurice smiled—he knew one man, at least, who had not been able to help it! He was interested in this pretty little vivacious school-girl, who concealed a tolerable fund of commonsense under her inconsequent chatter. That she possessed a determined will her presence here at this moment indicated.

Just as they were returning to the house again, after their tour of the grounds, Maurice saw a telegraph boy coming up the drive, with a message in his hand, which proved to be from Wickham himself.

He opened it eagerly. It was brief and to the point.

"Traced. Glen Haven Cottage, near Dolgelly, North Wales."

"Thank goodness!" cried Mabel, with a little shout of triumph, as he handed it to her. "We will start for North Wales first thing to-morrow morning. By the way, papa, isn't it somewhere near Dolgelly that Uncle Bob's Castle is situated?"

"Yes, my dear—Trissant the name of the place is, I think."

"That's splendid. We can go and put up there, and kill two birds with one stone. I suppose Uncle Bob won't mind."

"Certainly not; he'll be delighted. He has bought the place out of some fat or fancy, but he never has time to go there. It's left entirely to an old caretaker. He'll find it rather a bad speculation I'm thinking."

"Oh, no, he won't. It's going to prove a convenience to us, and as long as that is the case, Uncle Bob ought to think himself well repaid," which was an unbusinesslike way of looking at the matter, from which Mr. Butler's mercantile soul promptly revolted.

They left the Court with promises on Mabel's part to communicate with Maurice after she had seen Vera; but his mind was easier on Vera's account than it had been for some time.

Mabel was evidently staunch and true as steel, and she turned her rubicund papa round her little finger! Hence, her plans on her friend's behalf were not likely to meet with any paternal opposition.

Thus it fell out that about twelve o'clock on the day following Vera's flight from Glen Haven Cottage, a carriage drew up in front of the big gateway of Trissant Castle, and Mabel Butler sprang out, followed, at a much slower pace, by her father.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, looking up at its grim, and somewhat gloomy exterior, "what a very forbidding looking old place! It reminds me of Miss Nicholson in a bad temper. Why, it's an actual relic of the Middle Ages."

"A nice sort of a place you have dragged me to!" grumbled her father. "What on earth do you suppose I am going to do with myself snowed up in this mountain solitude? Why, I might just as well be a convict at Dartmoor!"

"Not quite, pater—you'd have to eat skilly there, and I can at least promise you eggs and bacon here. Besides," she added, putting her hand through his and looking up into his face with her coaxing blue eyes, "it won't be for long, you know—only two or three days. When we have found Vera, we'll take her off with us for the rest of our holidays, and we'll start in search of her this very afternoon. But we must get some lunch first; I'm dying of hunger."

Mabel had wisely brought with her from the hotel at which they had stayed the preceding night, a hamper containing a couple of fowls, and a bottle of claret.

They had written the day before to acquaint the caretaker with their expected arrival, but even so it had seemed more than doubtful whether she would prepare a meal for them, and Mabel—who wished to keep her father in a good temper, and who was perfectly aware of the soothing effect well-cooked food has on the masculine nature generally—thought it wisest to be prepared for emergencies.

She went forward and rang the long iron bell which hung down beside the gate. A tremendous peal followed, which died away in lingering echoes. But there was no answer to it—though

it had been loud enough to wake the seven sleepers themselves.

Once again she pulled it, and with the same result.

"There does not appear to be anyone here," she observed, looking rather blankly at her irate parent, who was beginning to lose his temper and his patience.

Mr. Butler did not like being kept waiting—he was not used to it either, and he indulged in a little mild swearing at the absurdity of his daughter bringing him hither on a wild goose chase, and landing him in a miserable mountain solitude, miles away from any habitable place.

"Of course the caretaker has gone out and taken the key with her," he added, finally, "and we may stand here cooling our heels till dark. I am not going to do it—no, not for twenty Vera Grahams. You'll just step into that carriage, Miss Mabel, and we'll drive back the way we came."

"Oh, pater—after all our trouble—"

"You needn't remind me of the trouble, my dear—I'm perfectly aware of it already. But you won't find me quite so ready to give way to your vagaries in future."

Mabel really felt like weeping. She had been looking forward to a few days' sojourn in the romantic Welsh castle that had been her rich uncle's last purchase, and here were they shut out from it on the very day of their arrival.

"Let us drive on to Glen Ravon Cottage, then," she suggested; "it would be absurd to go back now without having accomplished the object for which we came. We'll have lunch first, pater—a nice little picnic all to ourselves. You'll feel ever so much better after it, I'm sure."

Probably Mr. Butler was of the same opinion, for he grunted out something which might be taken as acquiescence, and Mabel was soon busy spreading out the contents of her hamper on the turf outside the castle.

It was a lovely summer's day, the sky was cloudless, the sunshine spread itself like a golden veil over all the hillside, the air was scented with the perfume of the gorse; a brooding peace lay over the mountain and stream, and even seemed to enfold the grey old castle.

There was nothing to tell the unconscious travellers of the tragedy that had taken place within its walls the night before, or of the shuttered chamber on the opposite side of the courtyard where the victim of it still lay.

They little thought that the very girl for whose sake they had undertaken this journey to Wales, was even now within a stone's throw of where they sat.

As they sat there, unconscious, Chance stood by their side holding the balance of Vera's fate in his hands. Which side would weigh down—life or death!

Mr. Butler, having finished his luncheon, lighted a cigar, and intimated to the coachman who had driven them hither, and who was still waiting until they had decided on their plans, that he could attack the remaining delicacies—an invitation that the man at once responded to.

Father and daughter, meanwhile, sauntered round the castle, and looked curiously at its ivy-covered turrets.

"I'm sorry we can't get in. I should have liked to explore it," said Mabel, regretfully. "If appearances go for anything it ought to be haunted by the ghosts of the old bards."

"By the ghosts of white owls, more likely," returned her father. "I never did think much of your Uncle Bob's sense—when he was outside his office, I mean—but now I have a smaller opinion of it than ever. I wonder where the deuce that housekeeper of his has gone? I'll write and tell him the way she fulfils her duties, and he'll make it hot for her in future, or I'm much mistaken."

Mabel looked to see if there was another entrance; but could find none, and at last they returned to the gateway, and told the coachman to get the horse ready to take them on to Glen Ravon cottage. He obeyed, and Mr. Butler hoisted his stout person into the carriage, Mabel slowly following.

Just as she took her seat, and was casting a last look at the sunny courtyard, with its tawny

nasturtiums, which were visible between the bars of the gate, her eye was caught by the glitter of something yellow on the stones, and in a moment she had sprung down again, and was peering between the bars to find out what it was.

"It is something that shines like gold," she said, announcing her discovery to her long suffering parent. "I wonder what it is!"

"Never mind what it is—you get in the carriage again," he returned, with impatience; but this mandate the young lady chose to ignore.

"I'm sure it's gold," she repeated; "but it's too far beyond the bars for me to reach it. The coachman got down from his perch, and after a good many abortive efforts succeeded in pulling the little yellow thing sufficiently close to the bars to pick it up, and give it into Mabel's hands.

She looked at it, and turned to her father with eager excitement.

"Here's an odd discovery, Pater! What do you think this is? Why the little gold heart I gave Vera Graham on her last birthday at school, and which she promised she would never part with. She must have dropped it herself, so it's clear she has visited Trissant Castle quite lately. Isn't it a singular coincidence?"

Mr. Graham confessed it was, but grudgingly, and as if he resented being forced to make the admission.

Mabel stood hesitatingly in front of the gateway. She felt a curious repugnance to going away.

Some instinct seemed to warn her of her friend's peril and proximity; but it was so vague that she could not, even to herself, put it in words.

When had Vera visited the Castle, and dropped the little golden heart there?

She looked at it as it lay in the palm of her hand, and wished it could speak.

"Now, then, are you going to stand there all day?" expostulated Mr. Butler, and, reluctantly enough, she turned round to re-enter the carriage.

And in that moment death weighed down life in the balance.

(To be continued.)

## STRAYED AWAY.

—30—

### CHAPTER XXX.—(continued.)

But she did not give a single thought to such a thing. Her love was true love, and true love is never bitter. It is meek in suffering, generous in self-sacrifice.

A clever worldly woman would have brought the selfish fellow to his senses; but Fanny clung to the tender sentiment of passion still. She was not angry with him for his doubt—only deeply, keenly pained by it.

"That he could think so of me, and I have been so true to him!" she thought, with a silent sob in every syllable—"looked forward with such joy to his coming home, and would have waited—content, if not happy—for years had he wished it."

She wrote to him a letter full of gentle remonstrance, setting forth the true circumstances with a simplicity and pathos that would have touched him had not his better nature been so thoroughly overcome by jealousy, and, unfortunately, Fanny's letter reached him one evening when he was playing the devoted to Miss Millard.

That lady and her family were comparatively new additions to the Penge aristocracy. Mr. Millard had some mysterious business in the City, and he kept a good establishment. He had a brougham for his wife and daughter, and his sons—there were two of them—drove a four-wheel dog cart with a hundred guineas horse. They were great in jewellery, carriage rugs and harness, and it was their pride to be thought men about town.

Adelaide, the only sister, ruled the house, and viewed her brothers with considerable scorn. They were slangy in their opinions of each other,

and pitifully supercilious in their discourse of women in general.

There was some goodness in them, but they kept it out of sight, because they thought it was out of fashion.

They suggested to Adelaide that she had better hook "that Falkland fellow if she got the chance. The old man was worth at least a hundred thousand, besides the business," and the girl sighed at their mercenary want of soul.

She had taken a liking to Percy from the first; but she was afraid to encourage the liking. Miss Millard took her idea of mankind from her brothers, and they did not possess her in favour of mankind.

Percy, now that he chose to consider himself no longer bound to Fanny, made no effort to resist the tempting pleasure he found in Miss Millard's society. She seemed to appreciate him, and he thought his heart was interested, whereas it was only his vanity that was pleased. Men who think they have been disappointed in their first dream rarely indulge in a second. They deceive themselves with a mixture of vanity and passion, mistaking it for love.

Mr. Falkland, the younger, played the devoted with good effect. Some women are coquettes by instinct, and men are a little weaker when they elect to act the lover whenever they have the opportunity.

The lover was Percy's natural part. Given a girl, simple-minded enough to be flattered, and believe him, and Percy would talk soft nonsense and look unutterable sentiment, because he liked to make impressions, and did not think of the pain he might give.

On his very first interview with Adelaide Percy affected the misanthropical, and so created an interest.

If he chose a song for her to sing it was a sad one, and he professed a fondness for the grand and gloomy in music.

He liked sad books, sad poetry, quiet conversation—so he said; and he talked like one who had found the emptiness of all things; like one who had outworn the world's pleasures and grown weary of them—wary of everything, except the faint hope he conveyed in eye and voice that there still lingered one in whom the traces of Eden remained.

He found some solace in this new flirtation. The Millards and the Falklands were ten door neighbours, and the girls met every day during Percy's stay.

The junior Millards called once or twice, but they did not care for Percy. He had seen more than they had, and knew too much for them. He set them down as unmitigated cads, and they voted him too clever.

Adelaide praised him openly. She said he was a gentleman, with an emphasis on the word that made the carefully-whiskered faces of her brothers tingle. Adelaide could be sarcastic when she chose.

"We are sure to dislike what we cannot conquer," she said, when they had Percy under discussion; "just as we doubt what we cannot comprehend. It is the way with you half-bred London men. Mr. Percy Falkland is a travelled scholar; and even his faults are better than some of your virtues."

"Better marry him," sneered the younger ones—Sydney. "There is no greater profligate in town than he has been."

"Then he is likely to be quieter by-and bye. Greatness in anything is to be admired. It is small profligacy that is so detestable."

"Adelaide is in love with him already; after her continental schooling, too, where she learned to look on courtship as a game of chess. I had rather see you love our cheesemonger."

"No doubt," sneered Adela. "Your tastes would be more in common. I suppose Mr. Falkland can beat you at billiards, and understands horseracing better than you do; masters you, in fact, in your two pet accomplishments. If I were to marry him you would borrow his money and cringe to him."

The Millards were not a happy family. The father had no thought out of the city, and the mother had no thought out of the world—a world of dress—visiting, tea-parties, and scandal.

Adelaide did not like her home. She was intellectual, and her intellect was cramped when it should have been fostered.

She detested the small talk of her mother's friends, the city shop of her father, and the hard men he brought home to dine, and the horsey slang of her brothers; yet they were all proud of her, and liked to show off her accomplishments.

Her father's favourite project was to marry her to a friend of his—a close-fisted, keen, methodical stockbroker of fifty—a gentleman whose presence set her teeth on edge, and whose voice jarred sadly on her musical ear.

In Percy she saw a prospect of escape, and she accepted his attentions with some gratitude. They were not long in discovering that their tastes were kindred.

"If I had not been so rash—so blind in my infatuated folly," Percy said to himself, "this beautiful girl might have been mine. Then there would have been a partner for me. As it is, I am fettered for life, and in danger of having our secret found out at any moment, and the whole brood of fustian jacket and corduroy relatives down upon me. It was a frightful mistake for me to make."

It is given to few men to be noble in resentment. Percy, now that his idol had fallen, stripped every attribute of beauty from it, and left it bare in the midst of its ugliest surroundings. He began to long for release—to ponder dimly whether it would not be better to obtain a legal separation that would leave him free.

Fanny's letter came while these things were in his mind. It was written in the sickness of her despair, and the prayer of the poor heart in every line was that he would go back to her.

"If my senses were not stunned—my brain bewildered by the fearful thing that has befallen me," she wrote, "I could explain everything so clearly that you would not doubt me; and I will, if you come back."

"You will save yourself much remorse, Percy, and me much misery, if you hear the truth and believe it, before it is too late. You should have been more gentle to one who did not think it too much to forsake home and friends and kindred, and give up even her good name to her love for you."

"Do come to me. I seem to have no strength, and my heart aches bitterly. It is such a terrible change from the bright hopes I had. I think, if I do not see you soon, I shall go mad—or die."

Mr. Falkland's doubt wavered for a moment then, and pity touched him; but then he remembered the scene in the passage in Maple-street, and it hardened him.

"She always did write good letters," he said, putting it into his waistcoat pocket till he could conveniently destroy it, "and she thinks I shall believe this. Women are all selfish alike. If she really cared for me would she have sent the letter here at the risk of its being opened by any one else?"

He was too busy to write a reply just then. He had promised to take his sisters for a walk, and Miss Millard was going with them.

#### CHAPTER XXXI.

##### FANNY AND HER MOTHER.

The elder Mr. Falkland lost no time in carrying out Percy's suggestions concerning Fanny. The old man was too keenly eager to get rid of the poor girl to neglect an opportunity.

He made it his first care to speak to old Bill West in the morning. It was an easy thing for him to deal with his foreman even in this delicate matter, for West was a workman of the old school.

He had rather too much reverence for the master, and, like too many of the hard-working poor, he thought it part of his duty to suffer, and be strong in suffering.

The builder had less reluctance than he had felt hitherto in speaking of the subject. He had grown accustomed to the thinking of it. With him it was merely a youthful indiscretion such as any gentleman's son might indulge in.

Percy was a gentleman's son in the builder's opinion, because the builder liked to think himself a gentleman. His chief regret—perhaps his only regret—was that Percy's indiscretion was brought so closely home to him.

Old Bill West had not troubled his employer or any one else with his sorrow. He talked of it sometimes at the fireside when the children were in bed and young Bill was out on night duty with the fire-escape. The absent daughter had cost the homely couple many a tear.

"You know, mother," the carpenter had said when smoking his solitary pipe at home—"you know, mother, I think Fanny will come back to us by-and-by. It's wicked to wish evil to anyone, but I feel sometimes that I could curse Master Percy—badly, bitterly,—only it would be wrong. And she's so fond of him. But I think she will come back—don't you?"

"I think so, father," Mrs. West would say; for the same words were spoken many a time, and they called each other "father" and "mother," after the fashion of the affectionate and lowly when they think more of their children than of themselves. "But it does seem hard that she keeps away from her own mother!"

They spoke like this on the evening of Percy's arrival in town, and the next morning the elder Mr. Falkland took the foreman into his confidence.

Bill West and wife had often thought of trying to find Fanny, but they did not know how to set about it.

Simple minded people as they were, knowing little of the world outside their own locality where they were married, and where their children were born, it seemed to them a hopeless task to attempt to search through the great city for their lost child.

"My son came home last evening," said the builder when he had summoned West to his counting house. "I am glad to say he has overcome his weakness—you know what I mean."

"Yes, sir." The carpenter comprehended dimly that when the builder spoke of Percy's having overcome his weakness, it meant that he had grown tired of her and made up his mind to forsake the poor girl he had led astray.

"He has come to a proper sense of his wickedness," said the builder, in a tone that impressed Bill West, and made him feel in some way that Fanny had been rather more to blame than Percy. "He is very sorry for what he has done. He told me to tell you so."

This was certainly gratuitous on the builder's part, but he felt that a certain kind of apology was due to the father of his son's supposed victim.

The carpenter lowered his head in respectful sadness and listened. He could have replied—his heart was full of homely eloquence, but he thought it best to say nothing.

He was getting old—he had a large family to support—and he could not risk giving offence to his employer.

"He wishes your daughter to be restored to you, Mr. West. He intends to do his duty. I intend that he shall do his duty."

"Is he going to marry her, then?" asked old Bill, simply.

The builder turned away with a few impatient steps.

The question struck him like a blow, and made him feel the emptiness of the consolation he was giving.

"He intends to restore her to you, Mr. West, that is what I mean, and make an extra allowance for her child. Of course you are aware—"

"Yes; I thought of the little one," said Bill West, in a tranquil tone of resignation; "but we don't want any extra allowance for that, sir, if we can get her to come home."

"I have her address. My principal purpose—my son's principal purpose—was to let you have that."

"Thank you, sir," said the carpenter, lifting his forefinger, respectfully; "and thank Heaven there's a chance of getting her home again. Master Percy's principal purpose is very good; but if he'd had a little less purpose and a little

more principle it would have been all the better for me."

Old Bill West had a quiet way of uttering homely truths that rather staggered the builder. Mr. Falkland was inclined to be angry at the remark, but he judged it best to let it pass.

There were some things that he could not answer.

"You had better send Mrs. West to her," the builder observed; "and you can have the day. I should not advise you to go in person. Your last visit, if you remember, had a bad result."

"Yes, sir; my poor girl ran away from those who would have taken care of her, for the sake of one who has served her just as I thought he would. I won't mention names because it may be painful to you. Mother shall go and fetch her."

"It had better be done at once," said Mr. Falkland.

His carpenter's simplicity might as well have been the keenest and most biting sarcasm, for it touched the builder to the core.

"You may lose her again if you delay. There is the address—26, Maple-street, Pimlico, and you had better take a cab."

For the first time in his life Mr. Falkland put his arm across the bridge that divides employer and employee, and held out his hand in kindly sympathy.

West pressed it gratefully.

Falkland left a sovereign in his palm; money with him was omnipotent, and he thought it would heal even a sorrow and a shame; but West dropped the sovereign and went away as though he had not seen it.

The coin lay on the ground in the midst of some shavings and a few dry chips of wood. Mr. Falkland did not like to stoop for it, and he did not like to leave it there.

He hesitated, looked round; no one was near to see him, or to know that he was going to pick up a piece of money his workman had refused. He picked it up, and put it in his waistcoat pocket by itself.

Later in the day he slid that sovereign into the voluntary contribution box of a hospital for the indigent blind.

He felt relieved then. It was an offering to the poor at last.

Bill West went home. Mrs. West was surprised to see him, as it was not dinner time; but he did not keep her long in suspense.

"You can go and fetch Fanny, mother," he said, with a suspicious quiver in his voice. "There's the address, and mind you bring her home."

Mrs. West was not in the habit of giving way to emotion, but the sudden tidings, though they were told quietly, nearly overcame her.

All the old remembrances—the memories of a mother's love gushed up in her heart, and she trembled.

"Mr. Falkland said you had better go by yourself," said West, "and perhaps you had. Get it over like, before she sees me. But you will bring her home, mind, no matter what she says."

Mrs. West gave way at his wistful glance.

"Our child—our dear, poor girl," she sobbed, while old Bill fumbled in his pockets for his pipe with a shaking hand. "She shall never leave us again. You stay with the child, father, while I go and fetch her."

Bill West nodded, and got confused between the pipe he was biting hard and the handkerchief he was trying to wipe his eyes with. Mrs. West hurried upstairs and dressed herself.

A very simple operation with her. She had only to tie her bonnet strings, and put on a woollen shawl.

"I don't think I will stay with the children, mother," said old Bill, striking the wrong end of a lucifer against the bowl of his pipe. "I think I'll go with you and wait at the door. When it's all right, you know, you can ask me up."

So they went, arm in arm—the affectionate couple who had grown old together, and loved each other in their age. They were plain and homely people, but their faces were an almost scriptural beauty as they went along—gentle shepherds journeying to bring back the lost lamb to the fold.

Maple-street was easily found. Mr. West had travelled over London from his boyhood, and knew its various localities very well. He knocked at the door of No. 26, and it was opened quietly by Mrs. Naylor in person.

"Is Mrs. Percy at home?" asked Mrs. West. She recognised a kindred spirit in Mrs. Naylor—a woman of her own lot in life—one who could understand her sorrows and her cares. The carpenter's wife felt thankful that her girl was there.

"Yes, ma'am. But the poor lady is very ill. I thought she was getting better, but she had a letter, and it seemed to make her worse."

"I am her mother, and this is her father." Mrs. Naylor opened the door wider to admit them.

"You had better let your good gentleman wait in my parlour," she whispered. "It might upset the poor thing if you both go."

Mr. West went into the parlour and stood looking out of window at nothing, while his wife and Mrs. Naylor ascended the stairs.

Fanny lay asleep on the sofa when her mother entered—sleeping in the sorrowful gentleness of her beauty, with her white hands, that had grown thin in a day, folded on her fair breast.

Then went a mother's cry of gladness up to Heaven when Mrs. West fell softly on her knees by Fanny's side.

She kissed the pale lips tenderly—stroked the pallid face with a caressing hand—she took off her own woollen shawl and wrapped it round Fanny's feet, as she had done when Fanny was a child, and then she sat on a chair, and looked at her darling till the poor girl opened her eyes.

#### CHAPTER XXXII.

##### MISINTERPRETED.

FANNY had dreamed of home while she slept, and it was a pleasant surprise for her to have the dear, familiar face of her mother so near when she awoke.

She rose in a moment with outstretched arms, and threw herself on the broad bosom that had never received her so gladly before.

Mrs. West did not utter a single word of reproof. She felt that her true mission was to comfort and redeem, and she only wanted to win her poor lost darling back again.

"You will never go away from us any more," she said, and Fanny, glad of the refuge to which she could take her sorrow and her child, answered, "Never, mother!" very earnestly.

She had not been so happy, after all, since she left the little house in Falkland-row, confiding her young life to the passionate promises of a man. With the exception of some few brief days of joy the whole time had been one of suspense and trial.

"Has my dearie been ill long?" asked Mrs. West, while Fanny, too faint to be held long, lay back on the pillows and looked at her wed-ding-ring with a gaze that was very sad to see. The carpenter's wife looked at nothing but the white and plaintive face of her child.

"Since the other day, when he came and was so angry with me. And I have done nothing wrong, mother—I have not indeed."

Mrs. West would have asked what right he had to be angry; but the question would have pained Fanny, so she put another in its stead.

"What made him angry?"

"He was jealous of a friend of mine—and he said such bitter things."

"Never mind him, dear, you are better without him," said Mrs. West, for she was still in ignorance of the truth, and Fanny kept her secret well, even now. "You shall come home with us, and I will stay to nurse you till you are well enough. Father is downstairs, shall I send for him?"

The answer was a silent sobs, and Mrs. West went softly downstairs to fetch the carpenter, who blundered up behind her as carefully as he could. His eyes were dim, and his feet, unsteady with emotion, did not find their way well on strange stairs.

Fanny welcomed him with a faint smile, and

he sat down near her, after having knelt for a kiss.

Women have more self-control than men, and Mrs. West was much the calmer of the two. She had instructed him privately to mind what he said, and not breathe a word that might upset the poor child.

"That will be all right," he had replied. "It was t'other way I feared most."

They talked together in a low tone; old Bill saying a few words now and then, but Mrs. West had most of the conversation.

She told Fanny about her brothers; what progress they had made, and other details interesting to her who had been from them so long.

(To be continued.)

#### A FORTUNATE ACCIDENT.

—10—

(Continued from page 297.)

Moreover, they were still to a certain extent doubtful about Kate's actual position, for she might possess a few shares in mines, and she might live at the Grove, and yet her fortune might not be a large one; so they had meant to be very cautious and to make full inquiries before they took any decided step.

The general aspect of affairs, however, as far as money was concerned, indicated clear sailing, and Kate's protestations carried no weight with it in Bertha von Rubenstein's mind.

Of course, Kate would protest that she had ceased to love Max; pride and self esteem demanded that she should do so, and though Bertha felt vexed for the moment at Kate's retort that personal experience should have taught her that love was mortal, still she was not inclined to actively resent the remark. Indeed, she would have frankly admitted that the smallness of her dowry had been the cause of more than one proposed betrothal having fallen through.

But meanwhile Max has rejoined the group, and has seated himself by the side of Mrs. Lanyon, with whom, unluckily for himself, he had years ago, before he knew Kate, carried on something more than a flirtation, and now they had met again; the fair widow was evidently intent upon reasserting her right to the undivided devotion of her old admirer.

Max von Rubenstein, however, was only talking with the widow so that he might the more easily watch Kate Killigrew's face, and he muttered under his breath something like an imprecation as he saw the glance with which the young heiress greeted Sir Oriel as he came up to her and said,—

"I have made inquiries in the Cove and they say that nothing can be done at present to help Martindale and Miss Lanyon. They have sent a man to Polper for a boat, and at a certain state of the tide some of the people seem to think it may be possible to take them off, but most of the natives advise that they shall be left where they are until the tide goes down again."

"And serve them right, too," here interposed Mrs. Lanyon. "I hope Mr. Martindale will know better in future than to yield to that girl's mad love of excitement."

"Really, Mrs. Lanyon, if I were Ethel's mother I should be too anxious about her safety to think of finding fault with her at such a moment," said old Miss Martindale, severely.

"Her mother!" echoed Bertha, who, it is almost needless to observe, hated the widow with a fine German spite. "Are you really the mother of that young lady yonder, Mrs. Lanyon?"

"Yes," was the mortified answer.

"Ah me; how you English women do wear," sighed the fair German; "I thought you were only a few years older than Max; and to think that you might be his mother!"

"Why don't you say his grandmother," reported Mrs. Lanyon, almost fiercely.

But nobody took much notice of the widow's mortification; but at this moment Mr. Fermor called attention to the approach of the boat which had been sent for from Polper, and once more the younger gentlemen of the party had to descend to the Cove to render what help they could to the two unfortunate Crusoes on Asparagus Island.

The exclamation,—

"I will stay with the ladies," from Herr von Rubenstein brought a fierce frown to Sir Oriel's face and made him pause; but before he had time to turn round Kate's clear, but sarcastic voice saying,—

"The ladies would very much rather you didn't, Max," set her cousin's mind at rest, and at the same time sent the young German down the hill with a flaming face and at a rate of progress that soon carried him ahead of Ralph Fermor and Sir Oriel.

#### CHAPTER IX.

To the surprise of their friends Theo Martindale and Ethel Lanyon managed to get ashore without even going through the preliminary process of a cold bath.

They were both of them good swimmers, and they had almost made up their minds to disregard the advice shouted to them from the shore and trust themselves to the comparatively smooth water rather than remain where they were to suffer the discomforts of exposure and hunger, when fortunately the boat from Polper, which the people had sent for, came in sight, and with some difficulty and at great risk the reckless couple were got into it; and by dint of combined skill and caution they were rowed part of the way, and then taken in the arms of strong men and carried to dry land.

"And now I'm so hungry, Miss Killigrew, that I am ready to eat anything," exclaimed Ethel, in high good spirits, as soon as they joined the party on Ten Balk.

"I think we are all in very much the same condition," replied Kate. "We have been so anxious about you two that we have not begun our luncheon."

"Oh, I am so sorry, and at the same time I am so hungry. Why, what is the matter with you, mother? You were not afraid I was going to be drowned, were you?"

"Not at all," was the careless reply. "But I have caught a cold sitting up here so long. I think I will have a glass of sherry, if you will get me one, Mr. Fermor."

The Lieutenant at once did as desired, and then the whole party sat down to the ample provision made for their comfort.

But a change had come over them.

Max von Rubenstein seemed to have forgotten the widow's presence, and he assiduously devoted himself to Kate Killigrew, while she, in the character of hostess, could not treat him with the distant politeness she would like to have shown.

At the same time his sister Bertha adroitly managed to get up a low-toned conversation with Sir Oriel Graystock, by whose side she had secured a seat.

"It was such a delightful surprise to my brother to meet Katie again," she said, softly; "and she, I think, was quite as happy to see him. It is strange how these things come about, is it not?"

"What things?" asked the Baronet, curtly.

"The meeting of those who have loved and been parted, and who meet again when fate will perhaps be kinder to them than in the past," sighed the Fraulein, who had lived a long time in England, and to whom English was as familiar as her mother tongue.

"And is that the case with your brother and my cousin?" asked Sir Oriel, sharply.

"Yes," was the answer. "They should have been married years ago, but friends interfered, and as they parted."

Sir Oriel asked no further questions; for he had no desire to pry into the affairs of his cousin, and, moreover, he felt too much pained at the

knowledge that she had once loved another man to dare to trust himself to talk about her.

But though he was silent he watched Kate and Herr Max so gloomily that she once met his eye and she smiled so sweetly and so trustfully upon him that for the moment all doubts vanished.

Of course Ethel was the noisiest member of the party; but her light chatter, kept up with three or four people at once, served to amuse the greater portion of the party, while the girl herself was delighted at having Theo Martindale, Ralph Fennor, and the Count in attendance upon her.

Mrs. Lanyon, on the other hand, though well looked after by the servants, was sadly neglected by the gentlemen of the party.

This was rather hard upon the widow, for she had grown no older since her daughter's arrival upon the scene, though what her real age must be had, of course, become rather more apparent.

But Mrs. Lanyon was for the first time in her life unconscious of this neglect.

She had eyes and ears and thoughts, but for one person only. The one overmastering passion of her life had been for Max von Rubenstein, and though it had slumbered for years, it had come back upon her now with redoubled violence, and she had neither the power nor the will to resist it, while her heart was growing hot within her as she saw how the only man she had ever really loved seemed to hang upon Kate Killigrew's every word and gesture.

The meal was over at last, to the great relief of more than one of those partaking of it, and soon as the party rose to their feet Mrs. Lanyon in a somewhat marked manner walked up to Herr von Rubenstein, and said,—

"I want to have a chat with you, Max," and thereupon she took his arm, and to the astonishment of himself no less than of his friends, led him away.

It had been previously arranged that as soon as luncheon was over they should all walk by the cliff path to Lizard Town, where tea was to be ready.

Kate looked at her cousin Oriel in amused wonder, and the mischievous fun that danced in her eyes prompted him to say,—

"Suppose we follow their example, Kate, and walk on together."

Miss Killigrew smiled, and took the arm her cousin offered her, though she mildly protested.

"They are evidently going to have an explanation. What have we to talk about that wouldn't be interesting to all the rest?"

"Something very important, I assure you," was the half-jesting, half-grave reply. "Come and listen."

Theo and Ethel climbed a lofty hill, and sat there silently enjoying the vast expanse of sea and land that lay stretched out before them. Then she said,—

"Do you know I think Sir Oriel is awfully spoons on Kate."

"Do you?" asked Theo.

"Yes," was the serious reply; "I've been watching them, and I'm quite sure he's over head and ear in love with her. I wonder if she cares about him."

"Impossible for me to offer an opinion," said Theo; "my experience of that sort of thing is very limited. I only know that I am 'awful spoons,' as you call it, on a girl who I'm afraid doesn't care a rap for me."

"Are you, though, dear, dear, who is it?"

"I can't tell you; I dare not."

"But you must—I want to know. The idea of telling me so much, and not telling me more. Who is the girl; do I know her?"

He shook his head as he replied,—

"I can't tell you."

"Well, whisper it, then;" and as she said this she bent her head towards him.

Who could blame him for kissing the fair cheek of the listener as he softly whispered,—

"You."

Certainly Ethel Lanyon would have given him what she herself would describe as a "piece of her mind" if her sudden leap to her feet had not nearly cost her her life, and involved him in the same destruction.

She had forgotten for the moment where she

was seated; forgotten that on that side nearly three hundred feet below them the cruel black rocks were fixed like Death's gigantic fangs churning the green water into angry foam, and seeming, to the girl's terrified imagination—as she saw and realised her awful peril—as though they were gnashing with wild delight at the near prospect of her awful death. And she must have fallen if Theo had not caught her in his arms and held her.

For five awful seconds the couple, tightly clasping each other, hung balancing and shuddering on the utmost brink of the frightful precipice. Then the man's strength prevailed, and, with the girl in his arms, he threw himself backwards, and they were safe.

Both of them were deadly pale, and Ethel gasped faintly.—

"I was nearly gone that time."

"Yes, we were both of us as nearly gone as we are ever likely to be, without going altogether," said Theo, gravely. "And we may tempt Fate once too often, so I think I shall be careful where I go in future, especially with you."

"I—I was so surprised," pouted Ethel; "and you took a kiss from me."

"Well, shall I give it you back again?" asked Theo, gravely.

She looked at him for a moment; then she laughed and blushed; and perhaps it was from the fear of putting her life and his in danger a second time that she offered no resistance when in the most conscientious manner possible Theo Martindale restored the kiss which had very nearly cost two lives.

It is not to be supposed that a proceeding of this kind could take place on the summit of a lofty and quite isolated pile of rocks without being seen by somebody.

And just as Theo, with no little self-complacency, had accomplished his second kiss, he observed to his infinite confusion that no less than four double-barrelled glasses were levelled at himself and his companion.

The first two spectators were not of much consequence, being only the German Count and Madame Myer, who were laughing, but the others, alas! were Admiral Lanyon and Miss Martindale.

Theo wisely refrained from telling Ethel of his disagreeable discovery, but deliberately levelled his own glass at the last-named couple, who at once resumed their walk, Miss Martindale looking extremely shocked, and the admiral savage to the last degree.

One thing was evident, however—neither of the spectators suspected the peril he and Ethel had so narrowly escaped.

When their friends were well-a-head the young couple continued their walk to Lizard Town, being careful not to join the rest of the party; and thus it happened that before any questions could be asked by Admiral Lanyon Theo Martindale was prepared with a highly satisfactory explanation.

#### CHAPTER X.

SIR ORIEL GRAYSTOCK and Kate Killigrew had strolled along for a short time in silence.

They were careful not to follow too closely in the footsteps of Mrs. Lanyon and Max Von Rubenstein, though they were obliged to go in the same direction.

Still, Sir Oriel did not quite know how to begin what he had to say; and it was not until they had reached a quiet nook where they were sheltered from observation that he suggested to his cousin that they should sit down for a minute or two and enjoy the view.

Kate acquiesced demurely enough. She had a suspicion of what was passing in her cousin's mind, but, with the usual perversity of her sex, she would not under any consideration have uttered one word to help him over his difficulty, and she now sat patiently waiting until he should find courage and words wherewith to begin.

When he did speak, however, his words startled her a little, for he said,—

"You were once engaged to Mr. Von Rubenstein, I believe."

"How do you know?" she asked quickly.

"His sister told me so, not more than half-an-hour ago."

"Did she tell you anything else?" inquired Kate, with subdued anger.

"Yes; she told me it was probable that the engagement would be renewed. Is that true, Kate?"

"No! if there were not another man in the world I would not marry Max von Rubenstein," replied Kate passionately.

"There are plenty of men in the world, Kate; but there is one man for whom there is no woman under Heaven like you," said Sir Oriel, tenderly. "Is there any possibility of his love being returned?"

Kate Killigrew did not withdraw the hand which her cousin had taken in his own, but she said, in quiet, earnest tones,

"Is not this love very sudden? Do you realise that it is scarcely a week since we first met?"

"No, it seems to me as though I had known you for years," he said, eagerly. "And, though in point of time counted by days and hours, the feeling may seem of sudden growth, it will live in my heart as long as I live."

Kate made no answer; her own heart seemed to echo the words he had uttered; and when, grown bold with her seeming acquiescence, he ventured to clasp her in his arms, and call her his own, she did not repulse him.

"We won't go in for a long engagement, Kate," Sir Oriel said, when they began to discuss matters. "Shall we be married next week?"

"Next year, you mean," she laughed.

"Indeed I don't; I mean what I say," he responded.

"No; next week is impossible," she replied. "It might, with superhuman effort, be next month."

"Then next month let it be; but I hear voices—one kiss, my darling. And now, tell me, shall I announce our engagement at once, and send these foreigners flying?"

"No, pray don't do anything of the kind," replied Kate; "wait a day or two, at any rate; you can trust me, Oriel, can't you?"

"With my life and with all that I hold dear," he replied, fervently.

Kate smiled, but she could not reply, for the voice of Bertha von Rubenstein exclaimed,—

"Ah! there you are, Katie; it is getting so late that the word is passed to hurry on to Lizard Town as fast as possible, and Miss Martindale has kindly invited us to return to Falmouth in your carriage. We came with the ordinary excursionists."

"We can accommodate you and Madame Myer," replied Kate, "but I doubt if there is room for the gentlemen."

"Oh, they can crush in somewhere; the more the merrier," laughed Bertha, who seemed to have recovered her good temper.

Kate made no reply; she knew that her aunt must have been almost asked for the invitation before she gave it.

When the party came together at Lizard Town they found tea ready, and more than one or two of them were surprised to observe the change that had come over Mrs. Lanyon.

One could scarcely have called it a frown that had settled upon her face, for the expression had altogether changed; while her features during the last hour seemed to have perceptibly hardened.

No one really took much notice of her, however, and it was not until tea was "almost over that old Miss Martindale remarked to Ethel,—

"If you were of age and had anything to leave, my dear, I should recommend you to make your will before going to Kynance Cove again; you might not always select so safe a spot as Asparagus Island for an adventure."

"What an idea!" laughed Ethel; "have you made your will, Miss Martindale?"

"Of course I have, my dear."

"And have you made yours, Miss Killigrew?" continued Ethel with her usual recklessness.

"Yes," was the reply; "I made it directly I came of age; but I mean to alter it with as little delay as possible."

"A marriage upsets a will," remarked Max von Rubenstein slowly.

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten," said Kate, hastily.

And then she drooped her eyes, fearing she had betrayed herself, while Mrs. Lanyon, on the one hand, and Max and his sister on the other, drew in consequence of her blushing conclusions very far wide of the truth.

Kate's remark about her will had put Mrs. Lanyon in mind of a circumstance that had previously escaped her memory.

When Kate came of age, shortly after her great uncle died, the uncompromising enemy of her branch of the family was believed to be Sir Oriel Graystock who, not satisfied with his own portion of old David Killigrew's wealth, was trying to get possession of a small estate that adjoined Graystock Manor, and which had been left to Kate.

She had in consequence made a will, which excluded him altogether from the succession to any property over which she had a power of appointment.

There were various bequests to friends and distant relatives, including a legacy of twenty thousand pounds to her "dear friend, Emily Lanyon"; but what especially troubled our heroine at the present moment was that bitter animosity towards her cousin, Sir Oriel, was the prevailing tone of the document, and Kate Killigrew resolved to destroy it that very night.

"I should not like him to know that I had ever thought so ungenerously of him as that will implies," she mused, thoughtfully.

Mrs. Lanyon's thoughts, however, had taken a much darker channel.

Her conversation with Max von Rubenstein had been to the last degree unsatisfactory.

Of course he had not been frank enough to say that he had ceased to love her, but he had told her very plainly that he could not marry her or any other woman who did not possess money, and at last he went so far as to admit that he had quite made up his mind to marry Kate Killigrew.

He, however, had not scrupled to declare that he infinitely preferred his companion, and if she were only possessed of one third of Kate's wealth he would gladly marry her.

This declaration had taken complete possession of Mrs. Lanyon's imagination, and her vanity was far too strong to allow her for one single moment to doubt its truth.

The widow became more moody and thoughtful than ever after Kate's remark about altering her will.

"This night," she kept muttering to herself; "this very night; or else it will be too late."

The drive home was uneventful except that Ethel Lanyon managed to ride on the box-seat; and her mother, complaining of a headache, squeezed herself into a corner, closed her eyes, and scarcely spoke the whole of the journey.

When they reached the Grove she went straight to her own room, and she did not reappear until the beating of the gong announced that dinner was on the table.

To her surprise, however, the Von Rubensteins and Madame Myer still remained though the Count had pleaded a previous engagement, and had gone to his hotel.

Dinner passed off as usual, but when the ladies retired to the drawing-room Kate Killigrew quietly slipped away to her own apartment, leaving her aunt and Mrs. Lanyon to entertain the guests.

For ever since her will had been spoken of a feeling almost akin to terror had taken possession of her mind lest Sir Oriel should see it and be pained at the tone in which he had been spoken of, and should discover how every possible precaution had been taken to prevent him from touching a sixpence that she could leave to any one else.

So, having locked herself in, she opened a little iron safe which she kept in her dressing-room, and taking the now objectionable document from its hiding-place, she deliberately tore it into dozens of small pieces.

She could not easily burn these pieces, however, so she put them in her pocket, meaning to throw them into the kitchen fire before she retired for the night.

When she returned to the drawing-room she found all the party assembled there, and Mrs. Lanyon was sitting at a remote table pouring out tea, while Max von Rubenstein sat close by talking to her.

The widow saw Kate enter the room, and she began to pour out a cup of tea for her, talking so volubly and nervously to Max all the time that he began to suspect mischief, though, of course, he could not guess what was really going to happen. He emptied his own cup, however, and placed it by the side of the one which the widow was just about to fill for herself, she having already poured out that intended for Kate.

For a moment he turned his head away, but only for a moment, and then—could it be fancy—was he awake and in his right mind—or did he really see the woman deliberately empty the contents of a tiny blue glass phial into the tea intended for the heiress!

The very thought seemed to make his blood stand still.

He made no sign, however; the several cups received their due proportion of cream and sugar; and then Mrs. Lanyon turned to him with a singular smile, and said:

"You may have the pleasure of giving Kate her tea, Max."

He rose with alacrity, while a slight but well-understood signal to his sister brought her at once to the widow's side just as the latter was about to hand him a cup of tea.

A glance told Bertha that she was required to distract the widow's attention for a moment, and she did so to such good purpose that Max contrived to take the cup intended by Mrs. Lanyon for herself, while he dexterously pushed the drugged one—if drugged it were—into its place.

Then he carried the cup to Kate, and remained for a few seconds talking to her and Sir Oriel, until, by what seemed a sheer piece of clumsiness, he completely knocked the cup and saucer out of the young lady's hand.

"How dreadfully clumsy of me," he exclaimed, in a tone of extreme self-reproach. "Pray let me get you some more."

But Kate declined, saying,—

"I really do not care about tea to-night, thank you."

Then she took her handkerchief out of her pocket to wipe away some drops of tea that had fallen upon her dress, when a whole shower of pieces of paper fell upon the carpet.

For a moment Kate looked at the shreds of paper in dismay; then, seeing the troubled expression on Sir Oriel's face, she laughed brightly as she said,—

"There goes my will; it was made under a false impression, and I had forgotten its existence until this afternoon, so I determined before I slept to-night to destroy it."

Max von Rubenstein went back to the tea-table and told Mrs. Lanyon what had happened.

"And she did not drink any of the tea?" she asked, faintly.

"No," was the curt reply.

"And what was all that paper thrown about for?"

"She had been tearing up the will, and pulled the pieces out of her pocket with her handkerchief."

Mrs. Lanyon rose from her seat—she felt faint and giddy, with the crushing sense of defeat; for with the destruction of that will was annihilated her last hope of becoming the wife of Max von Rubenstein.

"Good-bye, Max," she said, in a low hoarse voice. "My heart is crushed—I shall go away to-morrow; we shall never meet again. May we make you as happy as I would have done."

And she was turning to leave the room, when he put his hand upon her arm, and said, in a low warning tone:

"Katie did not drink the drugged tea, but you did."

"I!"

For one minute she remained silent, as though his words had suddenly turned her to stone; then with a wild shriek she threw up her arms, crying, "I am a dead woman. I am a dead woman!"

In a moment she was surrounded by her wonder-stricken friends, who vainly demanded the cause of her agitation; but they could learn nothing from her beyond her reiteration that she was a dead woman.

"Send for a doctor, and tell him to bring all necessary appliances with him to save a lady who has swallowed some poisonous stuff by accident," said Max, promptly.

Then he turned to Kate and suggested that the servants should take Mrs. Lanyon to her own room; and, despite her shrieks of fear rather than of pain, this was quickly accomplished.

As soon as the ladies had left the room Max von Rubenstein briefly narrated what he had seen and done.

"I dare say you thought me very stupid when I upset your cousin's tea" he said, turning to Sir Oriel. "But I did it on purpose, because I was not quite so sure as I should have liked to be that it was safe."

"And is it true that the wretched woman has swallowed her own poison?" asked the baronet, with horror.

"I think it more than probable—at any rate, she believes she has," was the reply.

The doctor arrived at this minute, and though the whole truth was not told him he was left to infer that Mrs. Lanyon had taken poison without intent to do herself injury, and a small bottle which had fallen from the wretched woman's bosom in her agitation was handed to him.

He looked grave when he had examined it, but he and his assistant set to work, and before the morning dawned Mrs. Lanyon was pronounced to be out of danger.

But the Grove was no longer a fitting home for her; and though Kate and Ethel never quite knew the nature of the crime meditated, neither of them expressed either grief or surprise when they heard that she had gone away, leaving no message and no address behind.

The morning after Mrs. Lanyon's departure Max von Rubenstein presented himself at the Grove, and formally proposed to Kate Killigrew.

It is almost needless to add that he was quite as formally refused; and that when he began to talk of blighted affections and of future hope he was quietly told that on a certain day within a month Kate Killigrew would become Lady Graystock.

Then he went away wrathful with himself and with his friends for having let so rich a prize escape him.

What became of Mrs. Lanyon was never definitely known; the admiral was always very reticent upon the subject, and when in due time he gave his granddaughter in marriage to Theo Martindale he particularly warned that young man to keep Ethel away from her mother.

But long before this event occurred Sir Oriel's wooing had come to a blissful termination. Not a cloud dimmed the summer sky on the morning that the young baronet stood before the altar in Mylor church with his blushing bride.

It was a very quiet wedding, with Ethel for bridesmaid, and Ralph Fermor for the bridegroom's best man, while Theo Martindale, as her nearest male relative, gave the bride away.

So deeply interested were all of the wedding party in the drama in which they were the actors that they failed to notice a tall, fair, handsome-looking man—a foreigner beyond doubt—who stood just inside the church door while the marriage ceremony proceeded.

When it had ended he bowed his head and walked away—a sadder and a wiser man.

[THE END.]

SHOES were blacked as early as the tenth century. The substance used seems to have been lampblack mixed with rancid oil; for, in an old romance, a man is ejected from a company of polite persons because he had just blacked his shoes, and they could not endure the smell.

## FACETLÆ.

GESSR has been well defined as putting two and two together, and making it five.

SUS (dejectedly): "Our cook is going to leave us." He (excitedly): "Great Scott. Can't you persuade her to take us with her?"

WIFE: "I'm afraid there's no hope for you, John." "Why?" "The doctor says he has a handsome young brother he'd like me to meet."

MASHER (to shop girl): "Lovely creature, I adore you. Do you give me your love in return?" Shop Girl: "Of course, I do. Anything else this afternoon?"

FRIEND: "Do you know that I am at last beginning to understand your poetry?" Great Magazine Poet: "Heavens! Is it then true that I am losing my cunning?"

MAUD: "How do you define love?" Marie: "Love is the life of illusions." Maud: "And what is marriage?" "Oh, marriage is the death of them."

POSTMAN: "Here's a letter for Mr. Jeremiah O'Flaherty." Servant Girl: "Wee, tis you who are the clever man to know his name! Sure he only kem here last night."

LOVING HUSBAND: "The last letter I got from you was the first one you ever wrote without a postscript." Fond Wife: "I know it, darling. I had no more paper."

MISTRESSES: "Mary, how was it that I saw you treating your friends to my cake and fruit?" Mary: "I can't tell, ma'm, for the love of me, for I'm sure I covered the keyhole."

MRS. GADD: "Did you see Mr. and Mrs. Biffers out in the rain? He held the umbrella over her just as carefully as if they were lovers." Mrs. Gabb: "That new dress 'er' her spots."

LAZTMAN: "Call me at five o'clock to-morrow morning." Boots: "That's pretty early, sir." Lazyman: "I know; but I've an engagement at eleven, and must not miss it on any account."

HAS the editor read my poem?" asked the long-haired young man. "I don't know for sure," replied the office boy, "but he's ill in bed to-day."

HUNTER: "I saw large flocks of wild geese flying northward early in March." Farmer: "Huh! If they wasn't geese they wouldn't go by the almanac."

A LITTLE Newcastle boy was invited out to tea at a lady's house in the country. Seeing some honey on the table, and not knowing what it was, he tasted. On being told, he remarked in surprise: "Oh, and so you keep a bee, do you?"

TRAMP: "Beg pardon, sir, can you help a poor man? I've lost my voice, and now I'm out of work." Old Gentleman: "Out of work because you lost your voice? Are you a singer?" Tramp: "No, sir; I sells fish."

JOURNALIST (preparing to go out with his wife): "Are you ready now?" "One moment—only my gloves to put on." "Your gloves, eh? Then I'll sit down and write the leading article for to-morrow."

"THIS eternal getting up is really very annoying," said a man at a play, rising to let some one pass him. "I know it is," replied the late one. "That is the reason I never come in myself till the curtain is up."

JINKS: "Everybody predicted that Hardhead would have trouble after he married that vain beauty; but she never leaves her home unless he is with her. How does he manage?" Winks: "He filled the house with mirrors."

HAVE you anything more to say?" asked the judge of the prisoner. "No, your honour; only I would ask you to be quick, please, as it is near the dinner hour, and if I am to go to prison I should like to get there in time for the soup."

"DEAR me!" said Mr. Meekins, "it seems so absurd for men to be constantly talking about their wives having the last word. I never object to my wife having the last word." "You don't?" "Not a bit. I always feel thankful when she gets to it."

"WHAT do you know about French dishes?" asked Mrs. Upperton of the applicant for employment as cook. "I know enough about them to make them, but never to eat them," was the reply. And she was engaged.

MRS. O'BRIEN: "Good mornin', Mrs. McCabe. An phwat makes ye look so sad?" Mrs. McCabe: "Shure, Dennis was sent to gaol for six months, for assaulting me." "Well, shure, don't worry, six months will soon pass." "Shure, that's phwats worries me."

"WHEN the snow and ice have gone," said the Sunday-school teacher, beaming upon the boys, "and Nature awakens from her long sleep, the tiny buds begin to appear, and then what do we have? You may answer, Robert." "Brimstone and treacle," replied Robert earnestly.

GERTIE (who has been very rude): "Aunty Clara, pray don't go away yet!" Aunt (flattered): "I had no idea you were so fond of me, Gertie." Gertie: "Oh! Aunty Clara, it isn't that; but mamma said I was to be whipped when you had gone."

"DO you not sometimes have soulful yearnings which you long to convey in words, but cannot?" asked the sentimental girl. "Yes, indeed," replied the young man. "I was once dreadfully anxious to send home for money, and I hadn't the price of a telegram by me."

STRANGER: "If I order shoes of you, are you sure you can make me a good fit?" Cobbler: "A good fit! Just you ask Mr. Richman. He always comes to me and gets his shoes made to measure." "Who is Mr. Richman?" "He is the owner of that big shoe factory down town."

"ONLY think," exclaimed Fenderson, "of the many uses to which paper is now put!" "I know," replied Noodley. "I was at the theatre the other night, and I was told that it was all paper. And it was a fine, substantial-looking structure, too."

FIRST CHILD (proudly): "My sister had a tooth pulled to-day, and she didn't make a bit of fuss about it." Second Child (contemptuously): "Bah! That's nothing. My mamma takes all her teeth out every night and doesn't say a word about it."

HE: "I don't see, Ethel, why it is that people think Demosthenes such a great orator; I'm sure there are plenty just as good nowadays." She: "But my dear, just consider at what a disadvantage the poor man was having to speak in Greek."

MANGUS (who has just moved into a cottage in the suburbs): "See here! I thought you said this was a healthy neighbourhood!" Acres: "So it is." "Well, I can't agree with you. We had not been here a month before my wife sprained her ankle, and yesterday the baby ate something that disagreed with him."

HAMES (the politician): "Here's a pretty mess! I've been invited to prepare a speech on the financial question for the residents of my district." Tills: "Well, why don't you go ahead and prepare it?" "I can't. My private secretary says he doesn't know anything about the subject."

AFTER-DINNER SPEECH: Master of the House (on his fiftieth birthday) to his guests: "Ladies and gentlemen, this day fifty years ago, when I first saw the light of this world—um, um—I did not for a moment anticipate—or—anticipate that I should ever see so numerous and—um—so distinguished a company gathered around me."

ONE of the best ways to carve an average "spring chicken" is to drill a hole through fowl, dish and table, and then insert an iron rod in aperture, screwing a large nut on each end. This obviates the necessity of the amateur carver placing one foot on the breast of the bird and the other on the chair, which looks ungainly and is not exactly nice.

WIFE: "I'm awfully sorry to tell you, John, that baby accidentally got into your studio and dabbed a lot of paint all over your last picture. Just look at it! I'm afraid it's quite ruined." Impressionist Artist: "H'h'—ah—oh, well, never mind, my dear, I'll give it a touch or two and call it 'A Study.' Nobody will be any the wiser."

MARKLANE: "I think De Smith has more cheek than any other man in London." Threadneedle: "What has he been doing now?" Marklane: "Well, to-day he was caught in the rain without any umbrella, so he stepped into Gingham's umbrella shop, and said to the proprietor, 'I'll just stay in here until this shower passes, if you have no objection."

WEARY BUSINESS MAN: "The noise and crowding at the restaurants at lunch time makes me sick. I wish I could find some place where I could lunch in peace and quiet." Boutin: "Nothing easier. Hunt up some high-toned restaurant where guests are expected to fee the waiters. You'll have the whole room to yourself."

"ARE you fond of etchings?" asked the young man who had taken the hostess's pretty niece from the country down to supper. "As a general thing, yes," she answered, looking up into his eyes with an engaging frankness that threatened havoc to his heart; "but," she added hastily, as he started to say something pretty, "not any tonight; thank you—it is rather late. A very little sherbet is all I care for."

"WHAT is your last name?" Inquired a teacher of a new scholar. "Peter, ma'am," replied the boy. "Peter," echoed the teacher, "what is your other name?" "Fairbanks," responded the boy. "Then, Fairbanks is your last name, of course," said the teacher, eyeing the round-eyed, vacant-faced Peter with considerable severity. "No'm," replied the child, respectfully, "my name was Fairbanks when I was born, but mother says they didn't name me 'Peter' for nearly six months."

AN excellent story is told of an itinerant exhibitor of the phonograph who was exhibiting the machine in the streets of Utrecht, while a number of customers were listening to selections of tunes. Suddenly the tunes ceased, and there was a pause. Then, in a loud clear tone, was heard the one word, "Hal!" delivered in a tone bespeaking authority. "What is that?" asked one of the listeners. "That," was the reply, "is the voice of Napoleon Bonaparte giving an order at the battle of Waterloo!"

A EUROPEAN regiment stationed at Umballa, India, had a colonel whom no one had ever seen laugh. A private of this corps, while a prisoner in the guard-room for a military offence, bet the sergeant of the guard five rupees that he would make the commanding officer laugh when he was taken before him. In due course, after reading the charge, the colonel asked the prisoner, "Have you anything to say?" "I won't say anything more about it, sir, if you won't," replied the private. The grim face relaxed, but with the chuckle came the decision, "Fourteen days confined to barracks."

SAILING vessels in the Australian trade frequently carry only one or two passengers, who share the saloon with the captain and chief officer. Aboard one vessel recently there was only one passenger, and the captain and mate generally contrived to get the most and best of what was on the table. One day there was a roly-poly pudding, with sweetmeats in the middle. "Do you like puddin' ends, sir?" asked the captain. "No, I don't like puddin' ends, sir," said the guest. "Well, me and my mate do," said the captain, cutting the pudding in two, and putting one-half on the mate's plate and the other on his own.

AN IRISHMAN named Pat entered a small grocer's shop, and the following dialogue took place. Pat: "Sure now, and what is yer tobacco an ounce?" Woman: "3d." Pat: "Now, what would that be for half an ounce?" Woman: "2d." Pat (hesitating): "Weigh me half an ounce." The woman did so and laid it on the counter, when a bright idea occurred to Pat. Says he: "Weigh me another half-ounce." The woman did as requested, thinking he was going to take the ounce and thus save the halfpenny. But when she put the two half-ounces together, Pat said: "The first wan was 2d, this was 1½d. Sure now, I think I'll take the last one." And, laying down 1½d, he walked out of the shop, leaving the woman too flabbergasted for utterance.

## SOCIETY.

BIRKHALL is to be occupied by the Duchess of Albany and her children for about two months from the middle of August.

THE Queen has given orders that at any Court or State function which the Shahzada may attend he is to have precedence of all the Royal Princes, excepting only the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Coburg.

It is probable that the second State Concert will be given at Buckingham Palace on Friday, July 5th, and the second Ball on Monday, the 15th. It is always very difficult to fix the dates of these functions, owing to the numerous engagements of the Prince of Wales.

THE Dowager Empress of China has sent Queen Victoria a unique present in the shape of a satin scroll, worked in gold and silver in Chinese characters, in acknowledgment of numerous gifts received from Her Majesty.

THERE is to be a garden party at Buckingham Palace next month. The Prince and Princess of Wales will preside at the function, but the Queen hopes to come up from Windsor for an hour or two, and Her Majesty will receive some of the guests in a tent, and may possibly go round the walks near the palace in her garden chair.

THE Duke of Fife owns several shooting-lodges in and round Mar Forest, but all of them are quite small. It is probable that the Duke and Duchess will arrange to rent Invercauld from Mr. Macquarrie, as that beautiful place is to be let for the season, and is the only house in Upper Deeside which could accommodate the usual Mar Lodge party.

THE Shahzada has made a very good impression on all who have had to do with him throughout his stay. He is intelligent, thoughtful, very fully appreciates the cordial way in which he is everywhere received, and seems to enjoy his time immensely; if it were less well filled up he would possibly enjoy it more.

THE Duchess of York has a decided penchant for earrings—ornaments that have been rather out of date, and which have never been worn by the younger Princesses of Wales. The Duchess of Coburg's daughters and the Hessian Princesses often wear small, single-stone earrings, leaving the more conspicuous danglers for an older generation to retain in memory of the past.

QUEEN NATALIE OF SERVIA's return to Belgrade has brought about marked changes in the capital. The dismal palace of Königsberg, which since her banishment has been the scene of constant State disputes and Ministerial crises, is once more as bright and gay as its gloomy aspect will permit. For the first time since 1888, music is heard there, and dancing takes place in the deserted ball-room.

THE Duke of Argyll is going to be married to Miss Isa Erskine M'Neill, a Bedchamber Woman to the Queen, and cousin of General Sir John M'Neill, V.C. The Duke of Argyll is seventy-two, and has been twice married before, first, in 1844, to the eldest daughter of the second Duke of Sutherland, who died in 1878; then, in 1881, to the daughter of Dr. Clungham, the late Bishop of St. Albans, and widow of Colnaghi Anson, and who died in the early part of last year. Miss M'Neill is only twenty-one.

MAR LODGE was not a "shooting-box," but one of the most picturesque, attractive, and luxurious country houses in Great Britain. The original house was built during the reign of George IV. by Sir Alexander Duff, to serve as a shooting-lodge for Mar Forest, but it was greatly altered and enlarged by the late Lord and Lady Fife, after the Queen purchased Balmoral. During the last ten years the house has been more than doubled in size, but all the additions were in harmony with the original structure. The place was known as Corriemulzie (from the falls in the grounds) until about forty years ago. The interior was splendidly decorated and furnished; the Lodge contained one of the finest collections of sporting trophies in the country. The destruction of Landseer's picture is much to be regretted, but most of the other works of art were saved.

## STATISTICS.

A MAN is generally at his heaviest in his fortieth year.

GREECE stands lowest in point of wealth of all the countries in Europe.

THE total cordage required for a first-rate man-of-war weighs about eighty tons, and exceeds £2,000 in value.

NEARLY one-third of the earth is in Asia, which also possesses more than one-half of the population; more than one-quarter of the earth went to make America, and over one-fifth for Africa. Europe contains only one-fourteenth part of the world's area, although she has nearly one-quarter of the population, and Australia contains one eighteenth part.

## GEMS.

ALL noble enthusiasm pass through a feverish stage and grow wiser and more serene.

TO know a man observe how he gains his object rather than how he loses it; for when we fail our pride supports us; when we succeed, it betrays us.

IN our relations to other people good-temper is a never-failing friend and helper. It disposes us favourably towards those we are with, leads us to consult their peculiarities, to understand their difficulties, to make allowance for their shortcomings, and thus to exercise a real influence over them. It is of itself an attractive force, whereas ill-temper always repels.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PINEAPPLE TART.—pare a pineapple, removing all the eyes; cut in pieces, leaving the hard centre on the stalk; cook until soft, with sugar to suit the taste. Fill with this, when partly cooled, tartlet shells.

BERRY PUDDING.—One cup sugar, two eggs, two teaspoonfuls yeast powder, two and one-half cups flour, one cup sweet milk, one pint of berries. Steam in pudding boiler about two hours. To be served with liquid sauce.

FRIITTERS WITH JELLY.—Make a batter of two eggs, a pint of milk, a pint bowl of flour (a little more may be needed if the flour does not thicken readily). Fry a delicate brown in very hot lard or beef fat; when done drain on brown paper and send to the table hot, with a spoonful of tart jelly on each.

BROWN BERRY.—Take five large and tart apples, pare and slice them. Put a layer of apples in a deep pudding dish, then a layer of bread crumbs, and repeat till the apples are all used. Put one-half cup brown sugar and small bits of butter over the top. Flavour with nutmeg or cinnamon. When ready for the oven, pour over one teaspoon sweet milk. Bake one hour, or until nicely browned.

LIMON DUMPLINGS.—Mix half a pound of bread-crumb with a quarter of a pound of shredded and chopped suet and quarter of a pound of brown sugar. Beat two eggs and add a tablespoonful of lemon juice; pour these over the dry mixture, work well until all is thoroughly moistened, pack into egg-cups that have been brushed with butter, stand in a steamer and steam for one hour. Turn out, dust with sugar, and serve with sauce.

ORANGE JELLY.—Dissolve one half box of gelatine in half a cup of cold water. Cut one half dozen oranges in halves, remove the pulp carefully, and lay the skins in cold water. Add to the pulp of the oranges the juice of two lemons, one cup of sugar, and one cup of boiling water. Stir all together, and strain. Dry the inside of the skins, notch the edges, fill with the jelly and stand on a tray until it begins to firm. Put in a cold place.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE average Japanese god is sixty feet high.

THE best watchmaker's oil comes from the jaw of the shark. About half a pint is found in each shark.

JAPAN has one of the best engineering schools in the world, and is beginning to manufacture electrical machinery.

NAPLES is to build permanent sea baths to accommodate forty-three thousand persons, and to enable them to have hot and cold baths at all seasons of the year.

MOST of the ready-made dresses for girls are made in Germany, where labour is cheaper and materials are less expensive than they are in England.

THE presence in the sick room of flowers with delicate fragrance is generally beneficial. Certain colours are said to act favourably upon the nervous system. Red blossoms are stimulating, while delicate blue flowers are soothoing.

AS a flower giving greatest diversity in shades of colour the carnation is perhaps unique, having flowers of a self or single colour in pure white, lemon, yellow, buff, terra-cotta, pink, rose, crimson, brilliant scarlet, red, maroon, brown, bluish-purple, grey, and all intermediate shades.

THE ancient Egyptian cats were yellow, with reddish stripes, such as are occasionally seen nowadays, and called by some Venetian cats. The cat was domesticated in Europe shortly after the Christian era, and the first specimens brought into England were very highly valued.

ONE secret of the willow's marvellous tenacity of life is to be found in the fact that it sends its roots a long way in search of moisture. It was discovered after an important aqueduct had caved in that its walls were cracked and filled for many feet with roots. These roots came from willows at least thirty feet distant.

A CURIOUS custom obtains in some portions of Spain in regard to betrothals. A young man who looks with favour upon a handsome señorita, and wishes to gain her hand, calls on the parents for three successive days at the same hour of the day. At the last call he leaves his walking-stick, and if he is to win the desired bride the cane is handed to him when he calls again.

A MOST curious and sluggish creature is the tautawa, a nine-inch lizard, whose home is in New Zealand. The little imitation saurian has the reputation of being the laziest creature ever created. He is usually found clinging to rocks or logs along the shores of rivers and lakes, and has been known to remain in one position perfectly motionless for many months. How the creature manages to exist is a mystery.

TEA is rarely used in China till it is a year old, because of the intoxicating property which new tea possesses. Three or four grains of theine are contained in less than half an ounce of good tea, and may be taken in a day by most full grown persons without unpleasant effects; but if twice this quantity, or eight grains a day be taken, the pulse becomes more frequent, the heart beats more strongly, and trembling comes on. At the same time the imagination is excited, and after a while the thoughts wander, visions begin to be seen, and a peculiar state of intoxication comes on. All these symptoms are followed by a dead sleep.

THE Esquimaux count their fingers—one, two, three, four, five. Above five and up to ten they use the second hand; thus, six is "the first finger of the other hand." Above ten they employ the toes. Thirteen, for instance, is "three toes upon the one foot," and eighteen "three toes on the second foot." Twenty they describe as a "whole man." They seldom go farther than this, but they can do so if necessary. For example, they express twenty-two by saying, "two on the second man," thirty-seven by "two toes on the second man's second foot," forty is "the whole of a second man." According to Doctor Nansen they cannot, or at least do not, count beyond one hundred, which is "the whole of the fifth man."

July 18, 1895.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**MARTYR.**—We do not give medical advice.**K. M.**—Of very little value, we should say.**ANXIOUS.**—We never recommend investments.**TROUBLED.**—Being signs of increasing years they cannot be obliterated.**T. B.**—No doubt it has some value, but we cannot give an estimate.**OLD READERS.**—Pure air is fully as important in sleeping as in waking hours.**FIRM.**—As soon as the required legal formalities are complied with.**CHEER.**—The cost of becoming a naturalised Englishman is about six pounds.**SCHOOLBOY.**—The battle of Sedan was fought on September 1st, 1870.**G. S.**—The soldier will have to pay the whole price of new uniform.**GRAY.**—We advise you to let your hair remain of the colour nature intended it to be.**GRAY.**—Address the Solicitor to the Board of Trade, Whitehall, London.**INQUIRIES.**—We never heard of such a curious association, and doubt whether it exists.**MARY.**—You would save money and get the job much better done by sending the garment to a dyer.**ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.**—If you could show the work to some expert it would, we think, be your shortest course.**GLOWS.**—A little fresh lemon or lime juice mixed with a very little glycerine will help to soften and whiten your hands.**P. B.**—The situation most likely to be obtained is that of clerk, provided the lad cannot go out as under gardener.**SUNKE.**—Either rub with plate powder and chamois leather or wash with warm water, soap, and a nail brush.**Puzzled.**—The pawnbrokers' three balls form part of coat of arms of the Lombards, who were the first pawnbrokers in this country.**WORRIED HOUSEWIFE.**—A paste made of two-thirds oatmeal and one third white or red lead, and made stiff with treacle, put in beetles' way soon clears them out.**MARION.**—First thoroughly brush and shake; then thickly sprinkle with pepper; finally place small lumps of camphor in each receptacle.**EEL.**—Steaming over the kettle is the proper way. It is altogether a mistake to press it with the hot iron; it would increase the damage instead of remedying it.**SONGSTRAINS.**—"Home, Sweet Home" was composed by Mr. J. H. Payne; the all-important music—really the feature of the song—was composed by Sir H. Bishop.**STEVES.**—By writing to Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., you will get ( gratis ) list of subjects set to candidates for the offices you aim at.**POSSY.**—Three tomatoes cut up fine, one pint boiling water, one-half teaspoonful soda, one half pint sweet milk, salt, pepper, a little butter, and four biscuits rolled fine.**CURIOUS.**—Women cannot throw because of a curious formation of the shoulder blade, which prevents the swing necessary to the proper propulsion of a stone or other object.**MILDRED.**—There is no special choice. One is in most respects as good as another. The only thing is to get the kind that suits the shape of the person who is to wear it.**POOR WIDOW.**—It is not easy to get fine embroidery to do at any price that would make it remunerative. There is just now very little call, except in special orders.**HORN-BEAD.**—We suggest that you study to so control your temper that it will cease to annoy others, if not yourself. To give way to it at the least provocation is to make everybody about you wretched.**EDIN.**—One egg, one cup sugar, one cup milk, one tablespoonful butter, two teaspoonfuls cream of tartar, one of salsafix, a little nutmeg, and flour enough to make stiff than you would for sponge cake.**CARAMEL.**—Two eggs, one cup of sugar, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one half saltspoonful of salt, two teaspoonfuls of lemon juice or one teaspoonful of vanilla. Flour enough to roll.**IGNORANT.**—No period of separation between husband and wife, however lengthened, will authorise either of them to marry again. Only death or a judicial decree amounts to a legal divorce.**KASHEE.**—Brush out all dust. Dissolve half a stick of black sealing wax in half a tumbler of methylated spirits, and when dissolved brush evenly all over the hat.**PHIL.**—The great naval battle of Trafalgar was fought on October 21st, 1805. The English, while defeating the French and their allies of Spain, destroyed Napoleon's hope of a successful invasion of England.**WILLOWD.**—Insurance companies are like other lenders, they will insist on your taking out a policy in which the premium amounts to an appreciable part of the sum they lend upon it, and then they must have names as securities.**S. L.**—Your best plan would be to go into a photographer's studio and learn the business from the beginning. Almost any photographer would teach you for a reasonable consideration, provided you render him assistance.**LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."**—Mix ivory black with half as much treacle and one fourth as much sweet oil, then add one-fourth oil of vitriol and one-eighth hydrochloric acid; dilute each ingredient with three times its weight of water before adding.**REGULAR SUBSCRIBER.**—It has been done by using ordinary black ink, some preferring the dull black ink others using the blue black. The great thing is to apply the ink evenly, and use enough to prevent a patchy appearance.**SALLIE.**—Such vegetables as potatoes, turnips, &c., are best cleaned with a brush. It makes work less disagreeable, as the hands need not be soiled; and in no other way can the cleaning be so well and thoroughly done.**ANNIE.**—Almost all of the hospital in the large cities will take young women who wish to learn to be nurses. If you have a choice of locality, write to the hospital of the large city in that vicinity and ask for the information you desire.**L. S.**—To "dance attendance" is an expression borrowed from the medieval custom which compelled the bride at a wedding to dance with whoever asked her. No matter how low his condition or how objectionable the person, the bride could not refuse.

## "AND THIS IS ALL."

I took my baby in my arms.

My little one now stark and dead;

I kissed, through tears, its clay-cold lips,

And laid it in its cradle bed;

And as I watched with sultry heart

The shroud, the coffin, and the pall,

But yesterday, oh! God!" I cried,

"My babe was mine; now—this is all.

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CONTENTS.

SERIAL STORIES.

	PAGE
AS IT FELL UPON A DAY ...	321, 345, 369, 393
BERRYL'S MARRIAGE ...	385
STRAYED AWAY ...	329, 353, 375
THE GREYSTOKE MYSTERY ...	325, 349, 373

NOVELETTES.

AN ECCENTRIC WILL ...	318
GLADYS HARTLEY'S STORY ...	361
HATRED TURNED TO LOVE ...	397
THE IMPULSE OF A MOMENT ...	337

SHORT STORIES.

	PAGE
CUDLIP'S ADVENTURE ...	380
THE MERRY LITTLE MADCAP ...	379

VARIETIES.

POETRY ...	326, 360, 384, 408
FACETIES ...	384, 358, 382, 406
SOCIETY ...	325, 359, 383, 407
STATISTICS ...	325, 359, 383, 407
GEMS ...	325, 359, 383, 407
HOUSEHOLD TREASURES ...	325, 359, 383, 407
MISCELLANEOUS ...	325, 359, 383, 407
NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS ...	326, 360, 384, 408

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